

Going Live in
A Convergent Broadcasting Newsroom
– A Case Study of Al Jazeera English

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine changing news practices especially at the moment of going live in a convergent broadcasting newsroom. The study chose Al Jazeera English, a leading international news network, as a case and adopted content analysis and ethnographic research methods to examine both the content and process of breaking news and live reporting. The professional practices in making breaking, live news were changed as a result of the implementation of convergent journalism in AJE's newsroom. These changes in both news products and news production were accounted for by the interrelated influences of a set of external and internal factors at the levels of newsroom and organization.

Chapter 1 Introduction

“Being able to provide live coverage of breaking news events is one of the unparalleled strengths of television” (Tuggle et al. 2007:58). Live, dramatic and compelling video aired on television gives it a competitive advantage over print media. As news released in a breaking format increases the ratings of newscasts and draws audience’s attention, television stations have rushed to be the first in making breaking news and getting it on the air (Seib 2001). The proliferation and emphasis on breaking news in newscasts have aroused scholarly and professional criticism about the rush to be the first with the news. The Project for Excellence in Journalism carried out research on the effect of quality on ratings in 1999 and found that television newscasts in 20 cities in the US at 11 p.m. had an average of 20% lower rating in news quality compared with newscasts at 6 p.m. The lower quality of newscasts at 11 p.m. was accounted for by its “orientation towards late-breaking news”. The “tremendous emphasis” on the “more recent but more mundane” breaking news replaced the more significant news stories aired during the day (Carr 1999).

Cable and satellite technology fosters the proliferation of live coverage in breaking news in the television industry. Since CNN gave instantaneous, real-time, round-the-clock news coverage of the Gulf War in 1990, the power of

the non-stop, live news has been highlighted and a batch of 24-hour satellite news channels has mushroomed. The competition in the real-time, non-stop news market has become quite fierce. CNN faces big competitors from the US, such as Fox News, MSNBC, and ABC News (Grover 2004). BBC World News, founded in 1991 and BBC News 24¹, launched in 1997 (BBC 2009a) are the main global competitors of CNN. Also, a batch of 24-hour news channels originating from non-English speaking countries, such as Al Jazeera from Qatar, Phoenix InfoNews Channel in Hong Kong and France 24, have entered into rivalry with the US-and-UK-based news services over viewership and profits. The proliferation of 24-hour news services demonstrates that international communication has entered into “the round-the-clock era of news” or “an age of instant global communication” (Thussu 2002:203).

Now the internet is challenging the strength of the 24-hour satellite news services in making visually impressive and non-stop live news. The internet is able to publish breaking news in as timely and vivid a way as a 24-hour satellite news channel. People are now accustomed to search for late-breaking news online rather than wait for big stories in front of the television. According to the latest statistics from the comScore Video Metrix (2010), in

¹ BBC News 24 is known as BBC News.

February 2010, nearly 140 million news videos on BBC sites were watched live by online viewers, with a growth of 143% from the previous year.

The internet, being “at the heart of the 24-hour news revolution” (Kansas & Giltin 1999), reshapes the television news industry. Along with the internet’s entry into the news industry since the late 1990s, both news production and news products of broadcasting have changed and the very notion of *broadcasting* itself has become difficult to handle. The traditional lines of different news outlets blur as each outlet, no matter whether it is print, radio, or the internet, is able to offer visualized and real-time news coverage in the same way as television. This evolution of the contemporary news industry has been described as *convergence* – also known as “multi-platform publishing” or “integrated journalism” (Quinn 2005b:1). News media in many parts of world have embraced the concept and agreed that convergence is the ‘future’ for the news industry. Just as Sulzberger (cited in Quinn 2005b:1-2), the chairman of the New York Times company once said, “Broadband is bringing us all together. We have to do it in papers, digitally and on TV. You can combine all three elements. News is a 24-7 operation, and if you don’t have the journalistic muscles in all three [platforms], you can’t succeed in broadband”.

“Media diversification is the past. Digital convergence is the present. Multi-media integration is the future”, predicted Giner (cited in Quinn 2005b:2), the

founder of the Innovation International media consulting group. However, the evolution of the news industry towards convergence has never been simple. First of all, the definition of convergence has not been standardized (Quinn 2005b:4), thus both news media and their practitioners have no pattern to follow. Secondly, a wide set of variables, such as legislation, technology, audiences and the society, are factors that influence the process of convergence. Thirdly, traditional conventions and different cultures of different news outlets have aroused stereotypes, reluctance, and even frustration among journalists who are required to be ‘multi-skilled’ and work for different media outlets. This lack of clarity and problems in the process of convergence call for empirical studies.

This study, focusing on crossmedia news production, especially when producing breaking news fills a gap in the studies of convergence and breaking news. With respect to studies on convergence, as digitalization and new communication technologies are all contributing to changing professional practices (Cottle & Ashton 1999:22), empirical research on news production across different media platforms has been placed at the forefront of the studies of media and communication. In order to improve our understanding of this change, just as Cottle & Ashton (1999:26) argue, “we need to engage in theoretically informed, detailed empirical studies of particular news

operations”. Among the small number of empirical studies in this particular field, scholars provide more insights into in the *print* context rather than *broadcasting* newsrooms. In addition, with regard to breaking news, despite examining the proliferation of live coverage of breaking news by television and its rise on the internet, researchers have failed to explore adequately the evolution of breaking news coverage in current converging environments. Most of the literature focuses on the *effect(s)* rather than the *process* and *contexts* of breaking news (Heyboer 2000; Lasica 1997; Seib 2001,2003). Little empirical research has been conducted to describe how breaking news is produced online, and to differentiate breaking news forms published in different news outlets. Therefore, more studies of newsroom practices, of inter-relationship(s) of television and online, and particularly of how timeliness is being reworked are required.

This study hopes to provide a fresh and thorough look at how broadcasters work across television and the Internet at the moment of going live. As different news media have different understandings of and demonstrate different levels of convergence, this study is unable to cover them all, and it chooses Al Jazeera English (AJE) - the world’s first 24-hour English news channel headquartered in the Middle East - as a case to answer the following research question: How do journalists work across different media outlets in a

convergent broadcasting newsroom, especially at the moment of going live? Before answering this question, the study objects will be clarified in the Literature Review and the prior literature involved around the 24-hour satellite news channels, breaking news and convergence will be reviewed to provide a theoretical framework for the current study.

The rationale for selecting AJE and its website is that AJE has a high profile amongst news organizations offering a 24-hour news service worldwide. At the prestigious 48th Monte Carlo Television Festival in 2008, AJE beat BBC News, Sky News and the Phoenix Satellite Television Company to receive the award for the 'Best 24 Hour News Programme'. The website of AJE innovates constantly and has close connections with some audience-generated platforms such as YouTube and Twitter, being unique among 24-hour news channels worldwide. Last but not least, it is significant and with gratitude on my part that the main headquarters of AJE in Doha approved my application for conducting field research in AJE's newsroom, thus making this research practicable and promising.

Content analysis and ethnographic research will be adopted as research methods. Features of news published by the television and the Internet will be examined. Daily newsmaking practices will be observed. Journalists and editors at work will be interviewed. It is hoped that, through the combination

of content analysis of news products with ethnographic research into the newsroom, much more complete picture can be given of both the *content* and *process* of breaking news published by television and the Internet. It is also expected to deepen our understanding of how convergence is being carried out in broadcasting newsrooms, and how significant crossmedia journalism is to society and the public.

The main points to be elaborated on in coming sections are as follows. Chapter 2 focuses on prior studies in three aspects of the research topic – 24-hour satellite news channels, breaking news and newsroom convergence. Chapter 3 discusses how content analysis and ethnographic research methods are adopted in this study. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 show the results of content analysis on news texts and of the ethnographic research in AJE's newsroom. Chapter 6 is the conclusion.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Watch television, search the internet, pick up any recent cutting-edge studies on news industry, or attend any lectures on the current development of this industry and you're likely to come across the same topic - convergence. Convergence is a buzzword in mediascape without a standardized definition. Different media organizations in different countries have embraced convergence in different ways. To put it simply, convergence is talked about in three ways: convergence in industries, convergence in products and convergence in production. This thesis focuses on the last one – convergence in news production, or newsroom convergence. In particular, it studies *newsroom convergence at the moment of going live*. Prior studies on live reporting and convergence provide revealing descriptions of the current research topic and theoretical underpinnings of this study. Perspectives around the two indispensable elements of the contemporary television news industry – live reporting and convergence, are each discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

This chapter addresses three areas related to the study of *newsroom convergence at the moment of going live*. As AJE is selected as a case for the 24-hour satellite television news channel, the first section gives a brief review of the development of the 24-hour satellite television news channels

worldwide and Al Jazeera network in particular. The second section discusses the liveness rendered by different media outlets, including local television stations, 24-hour satellite television news channels and the internet, and the characteristics of professional practices when making breaking, live news. Finally, the third section reviews some empirical studies of newsroom convergence at places scholars believe best demonstrate the process at some of the most innovative companies in the world, and highlights the challenges of studying the process. In summary, the key elements of this chapter include:

- * Prevalence of 24/7 satellite news channels worldwide
- * Al Jazeera – a new shining star in the 24/7 news industry
- * The rendering of liveness by different media outlets
- * Conventions in professional practices when going live
- * Convergent journalism in some innovative broadcasting newsrooms
- * Challenges in studying newsroom convergence

Mapping 24-hour Satellite Television News Channels Worldwide

In the 1970s, communication satellite technology began to be used in the television industry in the US (Volkmer 1999) and in the 1980s, satellite broadcasting arrived in Europe (Curran & Seaton 2003). In 1990, CNN (Cable News Network), the early adopter of satellite broadcast technology, provided continuous live coverage on the Gulf War and made the global 24/7

news network prominent and since then, 24/7 satellite news channels have mushroomed worldwide. The tremendous power of live 24/7 news was well demonstrated again in CNN's news coverage of the September 11 attacks in 2001 (Meikle 2009:165). Just two months later, a Middle Eastern news network Al Jazeera offered exclusive coverage of Osama bin Laden's speech on the September 11 attacks and live coverage of the Afghanistan War, becoming a new shining star in the global news market (Miles 2005).

Prevalence of 24/7 satellite news channels worldwide

From 1990 onwards, 24/7 satellite news channels have become prevalent worldwide. In the US, MSNBC and the Fox News Channel (FNC) were founded in 1996 and ABC News, the youngest member of the 24-hour television news providers in the US, first appeared in 2004 (Grover 2004). In Europe, the first 24-hour news channel Sky News was founded in the United Kingdom in 1989. BBC World News and BBC News 24 (now known as BBC News) were successively launched in 1991 and 1997 (BBC 2009a). The 24/7 news concept has also been widespread in non-English speaking countries. Zee News, the first 24-hour Hindi news channel in India, was founded in 1992 and Al Jazeera beamed from Qatar, a small country in the Middle East in 1996. Phoenix InfoNews Channel, launched in 2001 in Hong Kong, is the first Mandarin 24-hour news channel for Chinese communities worldwide. And,

France 24, an international news channel headquartered in Paris, started its operation at the end of 2006 (StarNews 2006).

Two Australian scholars, Rai & Cottle (2007) conducted an empirical study on the whole range of world 24/7 satellite news channels and offered an overall map in this regard for the first time. They charted an inventory of contemporary satellite news channels worldwide, with details of name, ownership, language and reach. In total, there were 98 satellite news channels around the world, revealing the explosion of 24/7 news channels everywhere except Oceania² and South Africa. In Oceania, Sky News Australia is the only 24/7 news channel, while in the South African region SABC Africa is a satellite channel but not an all-news one.

Rai & Cottle (2007:54) pointed out that the differences in ‘reach’ and ‘access’ of each 24/7 satellite television news channel produce complexity in mapping the global 24/7 news channels as a whole. In terms of reach, only 5 of the total 98 news channels have global reach³, including, CNN & CNNI, BBC World, CNBC, Bloomberg TV and Fox News. Differently from the free-to-air terrestrial television service, satellite television is usually accessible with

² Oceania region includes Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands.

³ This finding was based on the latest information gathered by the researchers in 2006. Some statistics have already been changed, such as the reach of Al Jazeera and its sister network Al Jazeera English.

subscription cost and certain distribution infrastructure, which makes the access to satellite television uneven. For example, the penetration rates of cable and satellite television in the US, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland are over 70 per cent, while in the UK and Australia, the rates are only between 10 and 50 per cent (Rai & Cottle 2007:61). Access rates of satellite television in different countries vary, so does different satellite television in an area. Take Australia for example: both CNNI and CCTV-9 can reach the Australian satellite television market. However, they are accessed differently. CNNI is easier to access than CCTV-9 because CNNI and BBC World are packaged with the Australian national channel while CCTV-9 is not. The satellite television market in Australia exemplifies the inequalities of the reach and access of satellite television news as a whole.

The findings of Rai & Cottle are echoed by the majority of studies on the ownership of 24/7 news channels from an economic perspective, which argue that global 24/7 news is in the hands of Western-based organizations (Boyd-Barrett 1998; Thussu 2003; Tunstall & Machin 1999). US-UK based media organizations are the major players in global newsgathering and dissemination (Thussu 2003:119). They have profound influence in global news flow and broadcasters worldwide. For instance, CNNI and BBC World are constantly monitored by broadcasters in all parts of the world for any breaking news

stories. In 2009, CNNI, with 42 bureaux worldwide, could be seen in more than 200 million television households and hotel rooms in over 200 countries. BBC World, the biggest in audience coverage around the world, is used by 233 million households worldwide to access global news (BBC 2009b:8).

Besides, US-UK based news agencies have definitive control of global television news flow and Reuters Television⁴ and Associated Press Television⁵ are the main providers of news footage for broadcasters worldwide. Broadcasters worldwide rely on their daily, round-the-clock news feeds, either putting the news footage on air directly, or dubbing the video footage with a new voice-over in another language. The US-UK dominance in the realm of television news is aptly called the “US/UK news duopoly” by Jeremy Tunstall (1999:88) and it “bestride[s] the news agendas and news flows of the world”.

In 2007, Thussu (2007) mapped the global visual media industry which includes television and film and viewed the global media as a two-way dynamic of “global flows” interplaying with “contra-flows”. According to Thussu (2007:4-12), “global flows” refers to the media which are “global in

⁴ Reuters is a UK-based news provider for worldwide newspapers and broadcasters.

⁵ Associated Press Television News, known as either AP Television News or APTN, is the largest video news agency in the world. It is based in the UK and is owned by an American news agency, the Associated Press (AP). APTN, with over 80 bureaux worldwide, linked by global satellite network, offers round-the-clock television news feeds to the newsrooms of broadcasters worldwide.

their reach and influence”, with most of them being the US-led Western media, such as Hollywood, MTV, Disney, CNN and Discovery, while “contra flows” refers to media who are “non-Western, non-mainstream” but still have impact on global communication, such as Bollywood in India, Phoenix Television in Hong Kong and Al Jazeera in the Middle East. Thussu (2007:12) emphasized that although the global media market continues to be dominated by US-led media groups, the global media flow is no longer one-directional from North to South, but “a complex terrain of multi-vocal, multimedia and multidirectional flows”. Just as Al Jazeera English (AJE) has claimed, the news channel aims to balance “the current typical information flow by reporting from the developing world back to the West and from the southern to the northern hemisphere” (2008).

Al Jazeera - A New Shining Star in the 24-hour news industry

An awarding-winner journalist Hugh Miles (2005) gave a vivid and detailed description of the history of Al Jazeera in his book *Al Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World*. Al Jazeera was born on 1 November 1996 with the strong financial support of the Qatari government. Nearly one hundred and forty million dollars were poured into its foundation for the first five years by the Emir of Qatar (Miles 2005:29). To date, Al Jazeera has been sponsored by the government and does not have the direct commercial

pressures that other news channels have. It airs forty to forty-five minutes of advertisements per day while CNN, for instance, has about three hundred minutes of advertisements in its daily broadcast (Miles 2005:2). Beside the strong financial support, when the BBC Arabic Project failed suddenly on April 1996 and left about 250 BBC-trained Arab journalists unemployed, Al Jazeera gained solid professional and personnel backup by employing the staff (Miles 2005:33:34).

Al Jazeera put much effort in the following ten years into expanding its viewership around the world. It launched its English-language website in March 2003. In 2004, it was named as one of the five best news websites awards by Webby Awards, along with BBC News, National Graphic, RocketNews and The Smoking Gun (Bond 2004). In the summer of 2006, Al Jazeera English (AJE), the world's first 24-hour English news channel headquartered in the Middle East, was launched to cover the estimated over one billion English-speakers worldwide. Its four broadcasting centres in Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington DC, cover the latest news in turn within a day 'following the sun'. Al Jazeera also plans to launch an international newspaper (Bussiness 2006).

As the Gulf War marked the watershed for CNN, Al Jazeera has become a "major global news force" since the Afghanistan War (Miles 2005). The

Taliban controlled over 90 per cent of Afghanistan after the US bombing and all television pictures of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan came from Al Jazeera (Miles 2005:140). The ‘Press Pool’, in which reporters from wire services and big media companies around the world were gathered and stationed in northern Afghanistan (the non-Taliban-controlled region), had no access to the Taliban-controlled region and was under strict control of the American administration which warned US television networks and wire services to give no advance information about Bush’s and Cheney’s schedule. With its monopoly on news information and without the censorship under the American administration, Al Jazeera became a household name in America and the world as a whole. During the war, Al Jazeera’s viewership (television only) increased from 35,000,000 to 45, 000,000, with 8, 000,000 viewers in Europe and 150,000 in America. It drew the world’s notice as a “news wholesaler” – selling television footage to other media companies worldwide including CNN, ABC, NBC, Fox News, the BBC and ZDF in Germany (Miles 2005:172), and a “news retailer” – offering fresh, uncensored information to the Arab world and the Western world (Meikle 2009:166). The deputy director of BBC (cited in Miles 2005:171) once commented that “Al Jazeera had brought something fresh to the table. It reminds everyone they can do a better job than others in news gathering”.

Some scholars (Campagna 2001; Miles 2005) note Al Jazeera is “the most popular and most controversial news network” in the world. Its high-profile in newsmaking, which shows in its objective “to give voice to untold stories, promote debate, and challenge established perceptions” (Al-Jazeera 2008)”, has produced both praise and criticism. Western media and governments criticized Al Jazeera as anti-American and even pro-terrorist. For instance, in the news coverage of the war in Afghanistan, the news channel aired much more footage of the suffering civilians while paying little attention to American points of view. As a New York Times critic Ajami (2001) once wrote: “Al Jazeera... may not officially be the Osama bin Laden Channel – but he is clearly its star... The channel’s graphics assign him a lead role... A huge, glamorous poster of bin Laden’s silhouette hangs in the background of the main studio set”.

The controversy generated mostly in the US has overshadowed the journalistic practices of the channel. US officials like Vice President Dick Cheney and the Defense Secretary at the time, Donald Rumsfeld, said that the network’s journalistic practices were “inflammatory, irresponsible and frequently misleading” (cited in Cohen 2009). “We are being blamed for accurately reporting what is going on in the world from an Arab perspective,” responded Al Jazeera officials (*ibid*). To date, the US satellite news market has not

completely open to the network, but it is seemed that the network has already find the way to fulfil its mission of reaching Americans – the Internet.

Worldwide satellite and cable television is now a hugely significant part of the global media landscape, and AJE is clearly a significant player. Since the Internet's entry in the late 1990s, the global media landscape has changed significantly and continues to do so, raising questions about how technologies and the uses to which they are put are changing journalism. Therefore, the relationship between television and online journalism need to be thought through afresh in relation to the changing global media landscape. The next two sections will explore this field. It examines the differences between television and the internet in making breaking news, and explores the relationship of the two in a contemporary convergent environment. And more importantly, it attempts to discover whether journalism's core values are being changed as journalism adapts to the different technological possibilities and pressures.

Characteristics of Journalistic Practices When Going Live

During the American Civil War in 1861-1865, the demand for news was so great that U.S. newspapers went to a seven-day publication. During the 1963 Kennedy assassination, live television emerged as the preeminent medium for reporting breaking news. ...During the 42-day Gulf War, CNN established the importance of a 24-hour news network with global reach. The

concept has changed the international news system – at least during times of international crisis and conflict.

- Hachten (1998:147)

Since the 1990s, breaking news and live reporting have been the two commonly used presentation techniques in the television news industry (Miller 2006:511; Reynolds & Barnett 2003:700). Local and national television stations tend to open daily newscasts with breaking news (Tuggle et al. 2007:58) and 24-hour cable news networks have an obvious emphasis on breaking news. For example, in one study Fox News aired breaking news forty-eight times within its twenty-four-hour news cycle (Miller and Hatley-Major cited in Miller 2006: 511). Also, there is little doubt that live reporting is prevalent in television news. Live-style expressions are pervasive in newscasts around the clock, such as ‘now I am at the scene’, ‘we now broadcast live from’ and ‘let’s link live our correspondent at the scene’. Tuggle and Huffman (1999:492) give a precise description of the rush of live reporting in the most competitive U.S. television news market: “Reporting live from the scene of a story is an increasingly dominant value in television news operations today. The proliferation of microwave and satellite trucks makes it possible for even small market news operations to go ‘live from the scene’”.

Breaking, live news is hailed by news managers, journalists and media consultants as a way to arouse the audience’s interests and to increase ratings

in the competitive television news industry. In the 1998 U.S. audience survey, “live coverage of stories going on at the moment” (Seib 2001:38) was the first choice made by respondents to answer the question - what could make viewers more interested in watching local news? ‘Live and late-breaking’ presentation style is seen as a ratings getter (Seib 2001:xii) and a helper to “distinguish a station in its market” (Tuggle & Huffman 2001:335) by television directors and media consultants. Researchers believe news in live, breaking format can more easily arouse viewers’ attention than a traditional format (Miller 2006). Journalists intuitively believe breaking and live news techniques draw massive audiences as they seek important information (Tuggle et al. 2007) and have positive effects on audience’s recall and appreciation of news stories (Snoeijs et al. 2002:87).

The television’s rush to be the first with live news has aroused criticism from scholars (Coleman & Wu 2006:7; Huxford 2007; Murrie 1998; Seib 2001; Tuggle et al. 2007; Watson 2005). Seib (2001:40) argued that television news “get lost in the rush to go live”. Similar criticism came from Koppel (cited in Seib 2001:40), saying “the technology tail is wagging the editorial dog”. Murrie (1998) also pointed out that going live for the sake of live has become a trend in television news. These scholarly criticisms remind us the importance of studying breaking news. The focus on breaking news will help us better

understand how technology has driven journalism, as breaking news production is placed by media managers at the forefront of the corporate commercial development, and is thus equipped with the most advanced technologies.

Despite the perceived importance and prevalence, research on breaking, live news is inadequate (Miller 2006; Watson 2005). Firstly, as “research on ‘live’ and ‘breaking’ as key variables is in its infancy” (Miller 2006:511), ‘breaking’ and ‘live’ are always discussed together by scholars and professionals alike, which is a puzzle for the current investigation of the prior studies on news production at the moment of going live. A few scholars make a distinction between breaking news and live reporting and discuss the relations of the two commonly used television presentation styles. Secondly, although many scholars, for example, media researchers on the ‘CNN effect’ and propaganda model advocates have studied breaking, live coverage on 24/7 satellite news channels, they focus on the *effects* of breaking, live news in big contexts: foreign policy, public opinion and international relations, rather than the *production* of breaking, live news by journalists from the 24-hour satellite news channel. There is an obvious gap in the study of breaking, live news: How does the 24-hour satellite news channel produce breaking, live news? Are journalistic practices of going live on the 24-hour news channel different

from those produced by a traditional television station? Thirdly, although some scholars (Huxford 2007; Tuggle & Huffman 1999,2001; Tuggle et al. 2007) have precisely described the nature(s) of breaking, live news and its role(s) in the *television* news industry, breaking, live news released by the *internet* is paid scant attention. Neither is the way it is being produced by online staff.

Through investigating the research that has already been carried out related to breaking, live news, the following section discusses how live, breaking news being published by different media outlets, including traditional television stations facilitated by satellite and live technologies, 24/7 satellite news channels, as well as the internet. The investigation into prior studies aims to provide a good understanding of the professional practices of making breaking news by different media outlets, and to showcase the inadequacy of the current studies on breaking, live news and thus highlight the importance of this study. Before doing that, the definitions of breaking news and live reporting will be clarified and then the relation(s) between the two will be discussed.

The rendering of liveness by different media outlets

According to Tuchman (1973), breaking news refers to *non-routine* and *unexpected* events which “burst to the surface in some disruptive, exceptional

(and hence newsworthy) manner” (Noyes cited in Tuchman 1973:111). Schlesinger (1999(1978):127) defines breaking news as “unexpected”, “unplanned” and “instant”. Similarly, Miller & Leshner (2003) see ‘breaking news’ as a story that is 1) an unexpected event, 2) important, 3) labelled ‘breaking’ and 4) unscheduled.

Breaking news distinguishes itself from live news via its key feature – the interruption of breaking news in a scheduled newscast (Miller & Leshner 2003). As broadcasters cannot schedule breaking news beforehand, such as hurricanes, earthquakes and car accidents, the unexpected news events have to interrupt the scheduled newscast. Another feature of breaking news distinguished from live news is that the content of breaking news is overwhelmingly negative (Harrington 1998). The history of breaking news is a list of crises and even of ‘the worst’ - such as the Columbine shooting, the O. J. Simpson Bronco chases and the September 11th terrorist attacks. Yet, not each live reporting is made up of ‘bad’ news events.

Watson (2005) sees live reporting as one of the key elements of breaking news. In everyday newscasts of network, cable, and local television news, breaking news and live news always present unexpected news stories together, working as twins. Although local television newscasts are filled with live news that is not ‘breaking’ at the moment, live reporting is by no means the prioritized

presentation style to cover breaking news stories. A news story with a banner of 'Breaking News' on the screen is always covered live by news anchors in an urgent tone, live footage shot from the helicopter, or reporters on the scene. Just as Miller (2006:515) argues, "Currently, there is no reason to believe that news presented as 'breaking' should be processed differently than 'live', since they share the same features of importance and unexpectedness".

Huxford (2007) reads live reporting in a nuanced way in which it is defined with the concept of proximity. Live reporting produces various forms of proximity, including "spatial proximity" when a journalist is proximal to the scene of the news event, "event proximity" when the journalist is proximal to the time the news event is transpiring, as well as "broadcast proximity" when the journalist is proximal to the live broadcast of the news show (Huxford 2007:659). Simply stated, liveness is embodied in three dimensions: *live at the scene, live at the time, and live during the broadcasting*. Huxford (*ibid*) argues that news coverage is truly live when the correspondence of all three dimensions happens. Interestingly, through the study on 270 pieces of purported live news, Huxford (2007:660-661) found only 37(14%) were genuinely live, while most were semi-live. This finding suggests one of the characteristics of live reporting in television news and will be further discussed in the next section.

Similarly to breaking news, live reporting has been a part of the media landscape for decades. Programmes were all live at the beginning of the television industry, which was honored as the golden age of television in the US and the Western Europe. During that period, live television programmes were varied, ranging from news, sporting events, music, drama, quizzes, humor to variety. In 1938, NBC broadcast television drama live for the first time (Sturcken 1992:1) and live television drama, with its hour-long-series format, made television distinctive and popular. In terms of television news, the earliest television news shows made debut in 1948, including *Television News with Douglas Edwards* of CBS, *Camel News Caravan* and *Today* of NBC (Blanchard & Burwash 1998:242). It is interesting to note that live news programmes in the early days of television, usually with fifteen minutes in length, were “little more than an announcer reading copy with some film footage added” (Blanchard & Burwash 1998:242). Live broadcasting in the golden age of television was centred on home entertainment rather than news information. Thus this section does not detail the live broadcasting in that period, thanks to the short duration and small impact on television news.

Since the tremendous power of non-stop, real-time news was demonstrated by CNN in the 1990s’ Gulf War, breaking and live news has proliferated in 24/7 news channels worldwide. When comparing breaking, live news released

by a traditional television station and a 24/7 news channel, the biggest difference is probably that the latter can produce *non-stop* and *continuous* live coverage. Miller and Hatley-Major (cited in AEJMC 2010) argue that the current definition of television breaking news is outdated. Thanks to the 24/7 news hole, the satellite news channel has always been ready to break unexpected events, thus the 'break-in' in scheduled television programmes is unnecessary. After conducting a content analysis on three U.S. networks - CNN, Fox News and MSNBC, the authors explored what types of news were labelled as 'breaking' and found that breaking news was significantly aired on the three networks during a rating period.

It is important to note that, despite Miller's and Hatley-Major's study, it is difficult to find studies on breaking, live news produced by the 24/7 news channels from the perspective of *news production*. Most researchers have studied breaking, live coverage on 24/7 satellite news channels with an aim to test the *effects* of live news coverage in big contexts, such as foreign policy, public opinion and international relations, rather than the *news production* and *journalistic practices*. There is a gap in the study of breaking, live news from the perspective of news production and how journalists are responding to the demands for this kind of news has not yet been explored adequately. Therefore, closer attention to breaking news production is required as it may show it is

not simply a matter of the news getting faster, more commercialised and more picture-driven, but rather changing ideas of news and ways of reporting news.

As well as in the television industry, breaking, live news is also common online. Since the development of computer technology and the internet from the late 1990s, internet viewers, similarly to television audiences, can watch events happen. It is very common for the sites of television news companies, no matter whether at transnational, national or local level, to offer streaming video services and enable viewers to watch television programmes live online. However, again, despite the popularity of breaking news and streaming video services on the web, studies on breaking news released online and the internet's rendering of liveness are still in their infancy.

White (2006:341) argued that the internet repeats television's conventions in the rendering of liveness and pointed out that "television and internet sites employ similar narratives about liveness, intimacy, and spatial entrances". For instance, internet sites copy the I/You address which is widely used in television programmes and target viewers as You and self in order to "render a unique and personal experience" and "produce longer engagement" (White 2006:343) between internet viewers and the sites. Television, which can bring the outside world into the home, has been portrayed as the window to any places around the world "without even the expenditure of movement" (White

2006:349). So has the internet and the computer screen is designed as the window into the lives of individuals even thousands of miles away. For instance, a member of QQ, an online chatting program like ICQ, has avatars in virtual space that can walk into a chatting room, share an internet space with others and change facial expressions when the members are typing texts. This is quite similar to live television programmes in which the audience at home feels situated at the scene but at a distant place temporally through the television screen.

Conventions of professional practices when going live

Tuchman (1973:111) once stated in her article ‘Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected’ that,

Sociologists have paid scant attention to workers who routinely handle nonspecialized emergencies, ranging from fires and legal cases to medical problems. Yet, some workers do precisely this task. Newsmen (and they are still overwhelmingly men) stand out as workers called upon to give accounts (for a discussion of accounts, see Scott and Lyman [1968]) of a wide variety of disasters – *unexpected* events – on a *routine* basis.

Tuchman’s statement implies journalistic practices are routinized to cope with unexpected events. Presumably, when making breaking, live news, newsmen should have certain routines and conventions in their professional practices. This section discusses the studies of news production in the breaking,

live context from two aspects: 1) the characteristics of journalistic practices when going live, and 2) the research methods adopted in such studies.

As mentioned earlier, through the study of 270 pieces of live news, Huxford (2007:660-661) found only 37(14%) were genuinely live, while most were semi-live. Although most of the live reporting is not genuinely live, this fact has been masked by journalists and editors through various techniques in news production processes, including a wraparound structure with ‘donuts’, ‘black hole’ live shots, visual symbols incorporation and virtual proximity created by computer technology. These frequently used techniques are unique conventions of journalistic practices when going live and helped to facilitate the *illusion* of live coverage.

Huxford (2007:661) points out that live reporting has a standard wraparound structure in which news anchor and correspondent do live links at the beginning and at the end of the report. The structure is “the only convention marking live broadcasts” in national and international television news where the small ‘Live’ caption is seldom used. The interaction between anchors and correspondent at the beginning and the end of the report is fixed to live news, while journalists’ at-the-scene stand-ups in non-live news are positioned in the middle of the news segment (Huxford 2007:671).

Broadcasters' jargon terms live links at the beginning and at the end of news coverage as 'donuts' and this has drawn criticism from television theorists (Huxford 2007; Tuggle & Huffman 2001). According to Huxford (2007:661), a donut is usually "both minimal and one-sided – no more than a 'thank you' from the anchor and the use of reporter's name" – it is difficult to say whether the anchor is speaking to a recorded footage or to a correspondent at the scene. Tuggle and Huffman (2001:342) also found that most donuts in live news were merely to "introduce taped pieces from locations where nothing relevant was happening at the time of the live report". To some extent, the donut functions as a symbol to remind television audience that the ongoing news is alive.

Another routinized journalistic practices at the moments of going live is the 'black hole' shot, which refers to "live reports from in front of dark buildings long after the relevant activity has ended and everyone (except the news crew) has gone home" (Tuggle 2001:57). Journalists are used to staying in a dark, chilly outside to wait the time of news broadcasting at night or in the early morning, and then to speak a few sentences 'live' to the audience. The 'black hole' live shots are common in television news. A study on news programmes of a US national television station shows that, 'black hole' live shots

successively account for 78% and 76% of the 6:30 and 10 o'clock newscasts of the station (McManus 2009).

Besides, and less commonly, visual symbol incorporation is another technical gimmick made by newsmen to create an illusion of liveness (Huxford 2007:661). Reporters are required to position themselves with visual symbols of events. For example, reporters usually do a live donut in front of a damaged house after a fire or alongside an empty police car, to indicate a fire incident is ongoing. Editors also ask their correspondents to point to the visual symbols in the live donut to highlight the liveness.

Compared with the above production and editing gimmicks, digital technology is more powerful to symbolize the journalist's proximity to events. Computer technology is widely adopted in broadcasting newsrooms to create "virtual proximity" to liveness - newsmen are "proximal to events through the wonders of digital manipulation" (Huxford 2007:662). A typical representation of 'virtual proximity' is a full-screen backdrop that shows news events in front of an anchor. When the anchor and figures in the event shown in the backdrop are matched in size, an illusion is created - the anchor is positioned in the scene and at the time of the ongoing event. Digital technology for virtual proximity is more popular in national and international broadcasting newsrooms than local ones, because breaking news happened across the nation

and the globe is much more difficult and expensive to be covered live. Digital technology, which helps to create virtual proximity to news events, enables newsmakers to virtually position themselves in a scene or a place where nobody is able to truly or geographically reach.

Although Huxford precisely explored the characteristics of live reporting in television news, the research method adopted in his research was not detailed. Huxford carried out content analysis on thirty-five hours of news programming from CBS, ABC and NBC, but how he sampled and coded these news items was not clear mentioned in his article.

Tuggle & Huffman (2001) carried out classic research into the live reporting of US local and national television stations. According to their findings, entertainment and sport are the main subjects of live reporting (Tuggle & Huffman 2001:340:341). The reason for the preference for such subjects is because most entertainment and sports events are “planned far in advance and involve no breaking information or development” (Tuggle & Huffman 2001:343), thus making truly live reporting feasible. Both time and scene of entertainment and sports events are predictable, thus a truly live reporting can be easily done. It should be noted that, such predictable events are different from the breaking news events we discussed in this study, which are unexpected and unplanned. Events are happening at any time in any place,

which are always out of the journalist's reach and are seldom presented in the truly live style. Among the numerous breaking events happening every day around the world, journalists mostly do truly live reporting on those with a relatively lengthy duration (Galtung & Ruge 1973; Schlesinger 1999(1978):660), such as conference press, weather conditions and traffic jams.

Content analysis was adopted as the research method in Tuggle & Huffman's (2001) study. In total, they examined 120 news programmes of 24 U.S. television stations with different market sizes. Some codings are "*the length of stories*", "*the subject matter*", "*whether the live element originated in the field, in the newsroom, or on the set*", and "*the amount of time devoted to live presentation and taped presentation separately*" (Tuggle & Huffman 2001:339). Interestingly, the coding category "*whether the live element originated in the field, in the newsroom, or on the set*" has some overlaps with Huxford's analysis on live reporting mentioned above. In detail, *the live element originated in the field* can be described as the 'black' hole shot analyzed in Huxford's study, that is, journalists are present live at the scene but not at the time the event is transpiring. *The live elements originated in the newsroom* can be described by Huxford's words 'the broadcast proximity'. *The live elements originated on the set* refers to the 'genuinely' and 'truly' live

style, a phrase used in Huxford's study, which means the correspondence of spatial proximity, event proximity and broadcast proximity.

As mentioned before, although some scholars (Huxford 2007; Tuggle & Huffman 1999,2001; Tuggle et al. 2007) have studied *broadcasters'* practices at the moment of going live, breaking and live news released by the *internet* is paid scant attention. Neither is how breaking, live news being produced by online staff. The following will discuss two empirical studies which are related, but not closely, to breaking, live news produced by *online staff* from the perspectives of *news production*, as it is difficult to find empirical research which explores how online journalists make breaking, live news. In brief, the first study, made by Hansen et al. in 1994, discusses the influences of computer technology on journalistic practices when making breaking news. Although at that time Internet technology was not widely used in the news industry, Hansen et al.'s study objective – to find any changes in the sourcing of breaking news when the newsroom is equipped with computers and electronic databases – is worth noting and studying. The second study on the updateness of online newspapers by duPlessis & Li offers some inspirations for this study to measure the immediacy of online news. Later, some insiders' working experiences of making breaking news for the web will be discussed.

For Hansen et al. (1994:561), source is a key index in their quantitative analysis on breaking news published in large, metropolitan newspapers which have access to computer technologies. The source has a primary influence on news content - more than half the stories published by mass media have originated from sources (Berkowitz & Beach 1993). Hansen et al. (1994:561) cast doubt on the high expectations of journalists in the mid-1990s that they had been freed from the dominance of official and bureaucratic sources for breaking news. Hansen et al. (1994:563) acquired a total of twenty-three “front page, local, breaking, public affairs news stories” from the ten largest US newspapers which owned or had access to electronic databases in May 1992. *Types of sources and technologies used to access sources* were coded and analyzed. The findings revealed that *the types of sources* of the sampled breaking news were the same as in the classic newsmaking studies. Although electronic information technologies “reduce[d] the amount of time to locate information” (Hansen et al. 1994:565), the reporters were “narrow and conventional” in searching multiple sources, as they mostly focused on the electronic database of their own. The former routinized journalistic practices in “organizational power structures, sources, and news frames” (Hansen et al. 1994:566) still existed and remained the same.

In April 2003 duPlessis & Li (2006) conducted content analysis on the updatedness of 100 online newspapers in the United States with different circulations and found that most of the newspapers (92%) updated their websites hourly. This speed of updateness was impossible for newspapers before the prevalence of the web. In order to measure the updatedness of a news site, they recorded the update time of the front page of newspapers and each of the news stories, which were shown on the top of the site, then categorized these updating times into five levels: “hourly, 5 hour, 12 hour, 24 hour and more than 24 hour” (duPlessis & Li 2006:167). Their findings on the updatedness showed that, 92% of the total 100 online newspapers were updated hourly, and 8% newspapers were updated in a 24-hour basis. The idea of duPlessis and Li of investigating the updatedness of online newspapers gave some useful suggestions for this study in measuring the updatedness of a broadcaster’s website. This will be further discussed in the Methodology chapter.

Some journalists working for online breaking news depicted their changing newsmaking practices and discussed their hopes and fears for these changes. Kari Huus (1998), an international correspondent of MSNBC, described her experience in covering foreign breaking news for the Internet,

In covering this Jakarta story, I was carrying a digital recorder, digital camera, regular SLR camera and a cell phone. My options as the troops arrived were many. I could use the cell phone to call in periodic updates to the story so that MANBC news editors could publish bare-bones text stories within minutes. Or I could use the time to instead record digital sound and still pictures. Then I could jump on a motorcycle taxi to return to the hotel, process the sound and images, and send them by email for immediate publication. The process is amazing quick...

Speed and versatility, the two strongest features of online journalism, have brought pressures and confusion to journalists at work. "Internet news reporting can be rich and timely. However, the results can also be confusing, incomplete or overwhelming", said Kari Huus (1998), "On breaking stories, how can we use the features of the Internet to tell the story in a better way? It's a compelling challenge to get the right combination". "With all these new technologies comes the speedup of news, and the rest of us just tap-dance really, really fast to keep up", said a radio correspondent Cheryl Devall (cited in Anderson 1998).

In his article 'Working at the Coalface of New Media', Hammersley (2009) gave a vivid description of how he worked as a field correspondent across all media platforms for the BBC World Service. "Citizen journalism: I'm going to ignore it," said Hammersley (2009:246) when arguing the discrepancy between our expectations of good online journalism and realistic journalistic responses, "It's not a threat to what you do, unless your output is on a par with

that of random bystanders. ...There has never been a citizen journalist covering a dull story, or one that requires more reporting than just being there and pointing the camera in the general direction". Specific to making breaking, live news for the web, although being equipped with a small, light and consumer-grade camera and a mini-laptop, Hammersley was very cautious in making live reports online and writing live blogs. "Live reporting is arduous enough work in one medium, but add in a couple more – radio and the web on top of TV, for example – and you're going to fade yourself quickly if you're out on your own." Live blogging a foreign reporting trip, although very popular on the internet, was also dangerous as "I have made mistakes of promising some cracking action to come, only to arrive at the story to find everything quiet" (Hammersley 2009:250).

One key point is revealed from Hammersley's words - it is more difficult producing multi-media news compared with working in one medium. As digitalization and new communication technologies are all contributing to changing professional practices (Cottle & Ashton 1999:22), empirical research of one of the biggest changes in newsroom – making news across different media platforms - has been placed at the forefront of the studies of media and communication. In order to improve our understanding of this change, just as Cottle & Ashton (1999:26) argue, "we need to engage in theoretically

informed, detailed empirical studies of particular news operations”. The next section will show some keynote studies that have been conducted in crossmedia news production, especially in broadcasting newsroom, and then highlight the challenges in studying this field.

Studying Convergent Journalism and Multi-media Storytelling

The future development of news media seems to necessarily require convergence between and within media corporations, as many scholars and media managers have predicted convergence to be the future of the media industry. As early as 1979, Nicholas Negroponte (cited in Brand 1987:10-11) predicted that the three circles of the media communication industry, including the “broadcast and motion picture industry”, the “computer industry” and the “print and publishing industry”, would be almost overlapping by 2000. In 1983, Pool (1983:27-28) substituted “the convergence of modes” for Negroponte’s ‘overlapping between the three circles’ and forecast a time when “conversation, theatre, news and text are all increasingly delivered electronically...Electronic technology is bringing all mode of communications into one grand system”. This vision of the future was hailed by many managers of media corporations in the mid-1990s, when the World Wide Web came into the common people’s lives and made it feasible for the internet to become the “one grand system” bringing all forms of media together.

Since then, convergence has become a buzzword in people's casual talks around media, technology, and journalism (Gordon 2003; Storsul & Stuedahl 2007). When American Online (AOL) and Time Warner merged in early 2000, the new corporation AOL Time Warner became the shining star of *convergence in industries*, or in other words ownership convergence between old and new media (ViewsWire 2003). iPod is an ultimate example of *convergence in products*, which combines text, audio, video and internet services into a light, small gadget. The partnership of the *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV and the newspaper's online operation TBO.com is one of the most talked-about examples of *convergence in production*. In brief, convergence is widely and frequently talked of in three ways: convergence in industries, convergence in products and convergence in production. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this study is concerned with the last one, newsroom convergence, a concept often referred to as cross-platform storytelling (Erdal 2007b; Quinn 2005b).

After reviewing studies on media convergence and crossmedia news production, Erdal (2007b:51-52) stated that: "A substantial amount of research has been done on news production in general, and television news in particular. However, little research has been done specifically on the production context in a digital, integrated broadcasting environment, taking into account new

technology and its relationship to changes in institutional context, production processes and the resulting texts”. Such inadequacy in the prior studies on newsroom convergence provides both challenges and interests to study crossmedia practices at the broadcasting newsroom. The following section will firstly talk about some keynote studies in the changing crossmedia practices at the broadcasting newsrooms, which are regarded as the world’s most innovative newsrooms in developing convergent journalism and then it will discuss the challenges of studying this particular field.

Convergent journalism in some innovative broadcasting newsrooms

The research of Cottle & Ashton (1999) of the BBC’s transition to multimedia production in the late 1990s is one of the earliest studies on crossmedia professional practices in broadcasting newsrooms. Cottle & Ashton (1999) looked at the introduction and impact of news technologies in journalistic practices, and found that digitalization, new communication technologies and technological convergence were key factors contributing to “the radical reconfiguration of broadcast newsrooms and changing professional practices” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:22). They argued scholars had paid scant attention to “the role of technology within news production” and thus called for “theoretically informed, detailed empirical studies of particular news operations” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:26). After examining the main changes in

the BBC's newsroom in four aspects – corporate contexts, news technology, journalist practices and news output, Cottle & Ashton (1999:22) drew a key finding that – changes in news practices were “far from *technologically determined*”. Technologies “may well be facilitating a revolution” in journalists’ practices in broadcasting newsrooms, but as technologies are “deeply *embedded within*, and *powerfully shaped* by corporate contexts, managerial strategies, professional norms and an increasingly competitive news market-place”, the impact of news technologies in journalistic practices should be approached in “innovation and socio-political contexts” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:22).

With respect to the changing news practices, Cottle & Ashton (1999:22) showed their concerns about “the increasingly pressurised and superficial nature of multi-media news production” in the BBC Newscentre they studied. Following the introduction of the technologies in the newsroom, three fundamental changes took place in news production processes: a number of jobs were axed, a number of people were re-deployed, and “a deliberate strategy” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:33) was implemented – journalists were required to be multi-skilled, working in more than one medium. During their interviews, many journalists showed clear critical and professional concerns over “the increasingly routinized, multi-skilled multi-media news production”.

They complained that “the increased workloads and pressures”, “the reduced numbers” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:35), and re-deployment of journalists had professionally spread them too thin to be specialized, and made them ‘de-skilled’ rather than multi-skilled.

The partnership of the *Tampa Tribune*, TBO.com and WFLA-TV in Tampa is one of the most talked about examples of newsroom convergence among scholars and professionals. Forrest Carr (2002), former news director of WFLA-TV, gave an insider’s view of the mode of convergence in Tampa. Carr (*ibid*) argued that the most common form of convergence between the three Tampa media properties was almost invisible to their viewers, users and readers: “We [journalists, editors and managers at work] do a lot of talking”. The convergence mode of Tampa was clear in seven circumstances: daily tips and information, spot news, photography, enterprise reporting, events like Super Bowl, and coverage related to public services. However, it should be noted that, when talking about the collaboration between journalists and editors at work, Carr (*ibid*) said much about the convergence between print and television staff, but little about how online staff collaborated with their two counterparts.

Silcock & Keith (2006:610) conducted in-depth interviews with 14 people working in the convergent newsroom in Tampa, in order to examine whether

journalists have encountered “cultural-based challenges” in their adoption of newsroom convergence. They argued that different broadcast and print newsroom cultures, which stemmed from the different embedded work routines, were “detrimental” to the adoption of newsroom convergence. For example, in the convergent newsroom of Tampa, the television staff were kept “at arm’s length from the newspaper because of print journalists’ distrust of broadcast journalists’ work routines” (Silcock & Keith 2006:617). The television had more deadlines a day than the newspaper, and this work routine made one source enough for television, but this had never been the case in the newspaper. As the print editor Gilger (cited in Silcock & Keith 2006:618-619) complained, “they would go with stuff that we would never go with. We wouldn’t go with one unnamed source ...You have to give at least two (in print), and this has to be cleared by an editor, and they have to be substantial sources”.

In addition, differently from cultural differences that “limit the effectiveness of convergence”, Silcock & Keith (2006:614) found that the company’s long-range strategy for convergence had pushed journalists’ acceptance of cross-media storytelling to some extent. As the interviewee Victoria Lim (cited in Silcock & Keith 2006:614), WFLA consumer reporter said, “I’m a consumer reporter hired by WFLA, but our corporate company also owns a newspaper,

the Tampa Tribune, and the website, tbo.com. So I file reports with TV, for the newspaper and the website. A lot of other organizations flat out failed because they really haven't succeeded in helping the rank and file understand what they're supposed to do because of convergence".

Lawrence World's Company has a high profile in developing newsroom convergence and is regarded as "one of the convergence leaders in the US and probably one of the most converged media groups in the world" (Quinn 2005b:106). In 2003, LJWorld.com, the company's main news site, won awards as best overall newspaper site and the best Internet news service in the world. In 2004, the *Lawrence Journal-World* won an award as one of the best newspapers in the US. The company's success in newsroom convergence has inspired scholars, for example, Gentry (2003) and Quinn (2005b), to visit its converged newsroom where the editorial staff of its print, web and cable television (6News) operations work together. Gentry (*ibid*) regarded "communication" as the essence of the company's success in newsroom convergence: "the more the groups talk, the better the operation runs". Gentry (*ibid*) noted good communication in Lawrence's newsroom was "significantly improved" through the adoption of a new software for sharing news assignments, and casual discussions "on a daily, even hourly, basis" among the print, TV and online editors and reporters. Quinn's (2003) findings were

similar after he talked with some journalists and editors in the newsroom. Quinn (2005b:108) noted that convergence happened naturally when “given the right environment and encouragement”. The company gave praise to any good journalistic practices in cross-media storytelling and this made everyone in the newsroom know the company’s expectations for convergence and working hard on mutli-media news production.

Singer (2004) conducted ardous case studies, including questionnaires involving a total of 110 journalists at work, in four convergent newsrooms⁶ in the U.S. which merge print, television and the website together. Two interesting findings were revealed after the observations in the newsrooms and questionnaires as well as interviews with journalists. First, journalists in the US were more enthusiastic to embrace convergence and accept the form of cross-media storytelling than the practitioners in the BBC Newscentre, whose reluctance and frustration at being multi-skilled were discussed in Cottle & Ashton’s research. Singer (2004:3) found that “journalists see clear advantages in the new policy of convergence”. Journalists commonly agreed crossmedia storytelling brought benefits at the personal level as they could gain versatile skills when working in more than one medium, and also bettered

⁶ In detail, the four convergent news groups are: 1) Dallas Morning News, WFAA-TV (ABC affiliate), TXCN (cable), dakkanews.com; 2) Tampa Tribune, WFLA-TV (NBC affiliate), TBO.com; 3) Sarasota Herald-Tribune, SNN Channel 6 (cable), heraldtribune.com; 4) Lawrence Journal-World, 6News Lawrence (cable), ljworld.com.

the organizational service of informing the public as stories talked in multiple ways and thus reached multiple audiences. Second, Singer (*ibid*) found “cultural and technological differences in approaches to newsgathering and dissemination”, and “a lack of training” hindered the adoption of changing professional practices in broadcasting newsrooms.

The research of Singer (*ibid*) was based on the understanding of convergence as “a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media”. Singer examined the newsroom convergence in mainly four aspects - technology, news products, staffs and geography. Interestingly, Singer’s way of analyzing the process of newsroom convergence overlaps with the above-mentioned Cottle & Ashton’s (1999) research of BBC Newscentre, which examines the main changes in the BBC’s newsroom in four aspects – corporate contexts, news technology, journalist practices and news output. This study builds on this material, particularly in the construction of interview questions for AJE’s journalists at work and the observation in AJE’s newsroom.

Challenges in studying convergence and professional practice

“A complex and more differentiated field of news production characterises today’s news ecology” (Cottle 2003:16). Satellite technologies, the Internet and the opportunities of convergence have stimulated the changes in both

news production and products of different news outlets. However, “a few studies only have begun to pursue the differentiated nature of news forms and professional practices into their production domains and, in so doing, have also begun to explore how news production ‘context’ and news ‘texts’ can be productively approached as mutually interpenetrating, and not as analytically separable moments”, argued by Cottle (*ibid*) after mapping out the theoretical dimensions of the studies of news production in contemporary mediascape. Some studies have tried to do this, such as Cottle & Ashton’s (1999) and Singer’s (2004) as discussed before.

Studies on news production in convergent, broadcasting newsrooms build on our deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each medium – broadcasting and the internet. However, our understanding of both is inadequate. In respect to broadcasting, the very notion of *broadcasting* itself is difficult to handle. “Digitization and convergence make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between what is broadcasting and what is not”, argued Erdal (2007b:53) when he accounted for the research gap in media studies concerning media production in the digital, integrated broadcasting environment. In respect to the internet, studies of news practices of online journalism are even more inadequate. According to Nora Paul (2008), there is a missing part which lies in the centre of the studies of the internet’s impact on

journalism – “the daily work of journalists, their work routines and their values”. Some scholars have begun to do the exceptional. The following will discuss some of the latest empirical studies focusing on this missing part.

Framed by a concern that “not much can be said about the work context in online journalism”, Quandt (2008:79:81) conducted a large observational analysis in five German online newsrooms, in order to examine “the actual news work” of online journalists “in the organizational, spatial, and time-related contexts”. Based on *action theory*, Quandt (*ibid*) conducted his observations on each action of an individual online journalist and divided each action into several constituent elements - “the action core (the most basic, largely undefined type of action, e.g. ‘writing’ and ‘reading’ etc.), the resources used for the action, the persons involved in the action (like contact persons, colleagues, etc.), time and space conditions of the action as well as the reference frame of the action (for example, an action can be framed as happening in a private or work context)” (Quandt 2008:79).

Quandt noted that these elements correlated with each other and were key factors that influenced professional practices of online journalists. For example, online journalists working in a large online newsroom had more spaces and resources than those working for a small website. The differences in spaces and resources decided the differences of work practices: journalists in a large

newsroom, with access to digital news agency services, spent most of their time in regrouping, editing and fine-tuning news agency stories rather than writing or reporting, while journalists working for a small website, with no access to wire services (probably owing to economic concerns by the news corporation), simplified their work to the *shovelware* of news content from their print counterparts (Quandt 2008:84).

Despite those differences, as Quandt (2008:89) highlighted, “multimedia production tasks are not of any importance to the journalists, so this clearly contradicts some early predictions of the journalists becoming a ‘multimedia news producer’ in the online environment”. The overall pattern of online journalism in the research was “a traditional (print/news agency) journalism” (Quandt 2008:95), or “secondhand journalism” (Quandt 2008:89). The fast speed of work and the dependency on news agency texts (Quandt 2008:95) were the main characteristics of this pattern. It should be noted that, although Quandt’s innovative research methodology enabled him to demonstrate the findings with precise, convincing statistics, for example, Quandt (2008:86) recorded the length in time of each action of an individual journalist to reveal the extremely high frequency of actions, his approach inevitably and greatly increased the workload of researchers who were conducting observations in the newsroom, and thus was not applicable to every research project.

Other scholars who conducted empirical research of online journalism sketched an image similar to Quandt's. Cawley (2008:57) examined the online operation of *The Irish Times* and found one major change in news production was the increased deadlines for daily news publication. "We respond to deadlines minute by minute, hour by hour" (Pope cited in Cawley 2008:57). Cawley also gave a vivid narration of the editorial meetings in the researched newsroom, which confirmed the lower status of online journalists who "struggle[d] to find their own identity" (2008:45). Online journalists, who attended daily editorial meetings of their newspaper counterparts, always sat at the back of the meeting locus, carefully recorded the news list of the print, but were not expected to say much. However, no press journalists attended the meeting of the online journalists. Online journalists were less paid than their press counterparts and the news corporation gave more loyalty and trust to the latter.

One key point has revealed from the above literature on online journalism that, "there is a clear distance between the ideals shared by online journalists and their actual practices" (Paterson 2008:2). Facilitated by the internet technologies, online journalism does not work in the way that we expect and thus raises the following concerns: Is new media journalism really a new form of journalism? If so, how? Despite the ubiquity of online journalism in

people's current lives, "we know virtually nothing of online journalism", argued Paterson (2008:1) when he explored the studies in this field, "Scholars examine what it has to say, what those producing it say about it, what its political and cultural influence is, and how audiences relate to it – but we still know little about what matters most: its construction". Research on online journalism is dominated by utopian predictions stemming from the early days of the internet (Domingo 2005,2008). To correct these speculative ideals of online journalism, ethnography, as Paterson (2008:1) suggested, is the "best antidote", as "any technological development is embedded in an adoption process where social subjects make conscious and unconscious decisions that an observer can trace".

Similarly to Paterson, after reviewing the trend in the studies of news production, Cottle also signalled out ethnography as a means to better understand the " 'truth' claims of news" (2003:18) and called for "a conceptual shift from 'routine' to 'practice' (2003:17) when conducting ethnography in contemporary "complex and more differentiated field of news production" (2003:16). "The earlier theoretical and explanatory emphasis placed upon routine tended towards a form of *organizational functionalism* which ideas of journalist agency in and practices became lost from view in the workings of bureaucratic needs and professional norms", criticized Cottle

(2003:17) when he summarized the previous ethnographic research which focused on newsroom routines and in which researchers regarded journalist “simply ‘unwittingly, unconsciously’ as a supporter for the reproduction of a dominant ideological discursive field”. However, the new ethnography as Cottle (2003:17) advocated, focusing on news practices rather than newsroom routines, borrowed the ideas in part from Michel Foucault and sees practices and discourses “as productive and facilitative, as well as repressive or imposed”. In other words, the new ethnography in news practices provides a more “productive” stance to journalists’ behaviour and explores how news production ‘context’ and ‘text’ can be productively approached as mutually interpenetrating, and not as analytically separate elements.

This current study is based on Cottle’s idea and examines the news practices of making breaking news in AJE’s convergent newsroom. However, this does not mean ethnography focusing on news practices rather than routines is the only and the best way to explore my research question, as no research method is perfect in studying a field. Indeed, both content analysis on news products ‘texts’ and ethnography on news production ‘contexts’ are adopted in the study. The research design will be discussed in the following chapter Methodology.

Summary

In today's news ecology, news is delivered via different media outlets, including traditional print and broadcasting media with increased 24-hour, 'real-time' capabilities, as well as the internet. This complexity in news forms and its causal factor – the changing news production, have brought great challenges to the media studies at the levels of production and organization. This chapter, which reviews the significant and the latest literature in three aspects – 24/7 satellite news channels, breaking news and newsroom convergence, provides some theoretical support to what I am addressing in this study - the crossmedia news production, especially at the moments of going live.

Firstly, the reviewed literature indicates a research gap in the studies of newsroom convergence: among the few empirical studies of newsroom convergence, scholars provide more insights into in the *print* context rather than the *broadcasting* newsrooms. Moreover, almost no 'substantial' research has been conducted in exploring changing news practices of a convergent *broadcasting* newsroom, especially when making *breaking, live* news. Secondly, some empirical studies of news production reviewed in this chapter, including Cottle's study on the BBC Newscentre, Singer's innovative articulation of convergence and Cowley's arduous examination of 'the actual

work' of online journalism, provide a theoretical framework for the current study. This study will follow their ideas of convergence as "a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography" to conduct ethnography in AJE's newsroom. Additionally, some of the reviewed studies of breaking news, which characterize professional practices of making breaking, live news, better our understanding of news production, and at the same time indicate the differentiatedness of breaking, live news forms published by different media outlets. The inadequacy of the studies of breaking news *online* again proves the necessity and importance of this study, and placed it at the forefront of those studies on broadcasting newsroom convergence.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This study adopts two research methods, content analysis and ethnographic research to find out how convergence is working in AJE's newsroom, especially at the moment of going live. Generally speaking, content analysis examines the *news products* of the two different news outlets of AJE – television and the website while ethnographic research targets the *news production processes* of its television and web team. It should be noted that, although the focus of this study is on *news production processes*, it is necessary to see what *news products* are the final outcomes, because it hoped through the latter to provide some more objective data to accompany the statements of AJE people and the observations during the ethnography.

Two sections are discussed in this chapter - content analysis and ethnography. In the first section on content analysis, the way prior studies adopted content analysis to examine news production is reviewed. Then the definitions of two terms in this study, *convergence* and *liveness*, are pinned down in order to clarify what elements could be measured in the content analysis. Lastly, it discusses the sampling, the unit of analysis and the coding categories used in the content analysis. In the second section on ethnography, firstly an overview of the prior ethnographic research into newsroom convergence is offered, much of it cited earlier in the Literature Review chapter, but revisited here

with a focus on methodological value. Then it describes how the observations in AJE's newsroom and the interviews with journalists at work were designed before the ethnography. Finally, this chapter concludes with the discussion of the accounts for a combined use of research methods.

Methodology I: Content Analysis of News Products

Content analysis, which is briefly defined by Krippendorff (1980:21) as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context”, has been a valuable and adaptable method in mass communication research for decades. In mass communication studies, content analysis has been often recognized as an essential step in understanding two main aspects: communication effects and processes (Riffe et al. 1998). In the ‘Content-Centred Model of the Communication Process’ proposed by Riffe et al. (1998:9), communication content is viewed as the “cause” or “antecedent” of a variety of effects in personal, political, economic, social and cultural aspects; and is also regarded as the “end-product” of the context of production, such as newsroom routines, practices, as well as social, political, economic and cultural factors that affect the making of content. As Riffe et al. state, content analysis is “an important tool in theory building about communication effects and processes” (1998:9).

Content analysis of news production via examining products

Content analysis advocates believe that the analysis of news content to examine news production is “unobtrusive or nonreactive” (Riffe et al. 1998). As news content is the product and consequence of newsroom routines, practices, and values (Shoemaker & Reese 1996), studies of news texts, which are carried out after-the-fact of its production, can “draw inferences about the conditions of its production, without making the communicators self-conscious or reactive to being observed while producing it” (Riffe et al. 1998). As Weber (1990:10) argues, “There is little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data”.

As a subfield of mass communication research, studies on global 24/7 news have relied methodologically on the diverse research methods in mass communication studies, with content analysis among them. As discussed in the previous chapter, the prevalence of the 24/7 satellite news channels and the popularity of the internet are the two most common outlets for providing global 24/7 news. However, research on the news products of the two outlets has focused more on their *effect(s)* in social and political aspects rather than their *production processes*. Compared with the research on 24/7 satellite news channel from the perspective of news production, such research into online

journalism is even more inadequate⁷. Just as Paterson (2008) criticizes, the research into online news production is “a paradigm that is both immature and controversial” (Paterson 2008).

Some scholars conducted content analysis to examine online journalism. Domingo (2005) gave a comprehensive analysis of the literature studying online journalism via content analysis. Previous studies of online journalism, with most of them adopting content analysis, “concentrated in the products of online journalism, news websites, focusing on the features they offered”. These studies tended to “take online journalism utopias and hypertext or interactivity theory as the starting point, to confront a sample of sites to the ideal models” (Domingo 2005). These researchers tried to “quantify with indexes the percentage of development of internet features, or ‘relative innovativeness’”, summarized Domingo (2005), “Researchers construct the indexes transforming the utopias into observable elements to be checked on the websites”. The way of quantifying *convergence* in this study was inspired by these ideas. It took some ideals of convergent journalism as the starting point, looked for the measurable features of AJE’s news content, both on-air and online, and confronted them with the ideals, thus quantifying the level of convergence of AJE.

⁷ The inadequacy of studies in this particular field was discussed in detail in the

Operationalizing the terms of this study

“A central idea in content analysis is that many words of the text are classified into much fewer content categories” (Weber 1990:3). To classify the text of AJE’s news content into categories, it is necessary to define two terms in this study, *convergence* and *liveness*.

Convergence was defined as “a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online” by Singer (2004:3). Quinn (2005b) also noted that convergence simply referred to crossmedia journalism and multimedia news products. However, to study convergence by content analysis was a big challenge. News content, being the ‘end-product of the context of production’, could only make ‘inferences from data to their context’ *to some extent*, as convergence was a complex evolving phenomenon as Singer (2004:3) noted and most times convergence happened ‘behind-the-scene’ in news production processes.

This does not mean convergence is immeasurable. Following the ideas of prior studies adopting content analysis to examine online journalism, I examined the convergence of AJE through the ‘products of convergent journalism’ – its television and online news, and compared the features of these news products

with the ideals of convergent journalism, including *interactivity*, *immediacy*, and *multimedia*.

With respect to *interactivity*, the content sharing and products' promotion across AJE's television and online were examined. With respect to *immediacy*, the time of breaking news published online was recorded and compared with that of the on-air news, in order to explore which of the two had priority in releasing breaking news and to quantify the levels of immediacy. With respect to *multimedia*, the number of online news items attached to a video clip was counted and compared with that without such attachment, in order to quantify the percentage of multimedia on AJE's website.

Besides convergence, *liveness* is another key term in this study topic. Liveness refers to the correspondence of "the time of event" with "the transmission and viewing times" (Feuer 1983). Huxford (2007) defined well the liveness rendered by television in terms of three dimensions: live at the scene, live at the time, and live during the broadcasting. Tuggle & Huffman (2001) also conducted classic content analysis on the live coverage of breaking news in US local television stations. One of their coding categories "whether the live element originated in the field, in the newsroom, or on the set" overlapped with Huxford's analysis on live reporting. This study on television liveness accorded with these ideas.

It is implicit that the above-mentioned definitions on liveness are for television news which may not be applicable to online news. I regarded *updatedness* as a better word than liveness to depict the internet's rendering of liveness. The internet's setting on the signalling time of the latest update rendered a version of live engagement between viewers, news production and news products, suggesting that news be updated and published in real-time. The study of internet updatedness was kept in line with du Plessis & Li's (2006) content analysis of online newspapers⁸. The updatedness of AJE's online news, referring to the refreshing with the latest information on the website, was shown by a note at the top of the front page and each news story: 'Updated on Monday, August 3, 2009, 11:21 Mecca Time, 08:21 GMT,' for example.

In addition to convergence and liveness, the *source* of AJE's news was also examined. As stated in the Literature Review chapter, source was a key index in the content analysis of examining breaking news and its production (Hansen et al. 1994). The sources of AJE's news were easily accessed. For the on-air news, sources were mentioned at the end of lead-ins presented by the news anchor, for example, 'more on that now, from XXX (the name of AJE's reporter)', or noted at the end of news story by a correspondent, such as 'XX,

⁸ For more details about Tuggle & Huffman's study and du Plessis and Li's study please see the Literature Review.

Al-Jazeera in Kabul' or 'XXX, Al-Jazeera'. For the online news, sources were noted at the end of each news story, such as 'sourced from AJE and agencies'.

Data collection, sampling and coding

As this content analysis examined convergence by comparing the features of on-air and online news, both the television and online news of AJE were selected. The regular one-hour news programme *News Hour* starting at 09:00 GMT was selected from among around twenty news programmes aired on the AJE news channel on a daily basis. *News Hour* is comprehensive and representative and the news programme is a combination of hard and soft news instead of interviews, discussions or debate-centred shows. And it is the only news programme among the daily newscasts with live links among the four headquarters of AJE - Doha, Washington D.C., London and Kuala Lumpur, which enables it to have more live reporting than other news programmes.

One calendar week from Monday August 3 to Sunday August 9, 2009 was selected for the content analysis. The week was judged representative of normal output as no major or out-of-the-ordinary events were scheduled for that week. The sampled news programmes were accessed from the Ecast Education website: www.e-cast.co.nz/education. Also online news during the calendar week was accessed from AJE's website: <http://english.aljazeera.net>.

As the television news programme could be recorded by computer itself from Ecast, the researcher was able to keep refreshing the website manually in the sampled time slot (from 09:00 to 10:00 GMT) in order to get the latest updated online news. Each of the updated front page and news stories was snapshotted and archived.

The unit of analysis was the amount of time for different news items rather than the number of these items. Analyses on the amount of time for different news items were more sophisticated and time-consuming, and were accounted as follows. A piece of television news is made up of several news items, such as a lead-in of a news anchor, the sound-bite with a pre-recorded video package and a stand-up of a correspondent at the scene. However, these items are sometimes mixed up and shown together on the screen. The television screen is divided into two parts, with the left side showing a correspondent presenting live at the scene and with the right side airing a pre-recorded video package. Therefore, if I used the item as my unit of analysis, it became very difficult to say whether the news item was a live segment or a pre-recorded one. I found this problem when piloting the coding categories.

The content in the two news products was coded slightly separately, because of differences in the use of text and audiovisual material, however both were coded for topic; whether the news was breaking or not; length of breaking

news; whether the news was presented live or pre-recorded; whether the live element originated in the field, in the newsroom, or on the set; length of the item being presented live; as well as sources. Online video content was additionally coded for whether the content was annotated as reproduced from television⁹.

Methodology II: Ethnographic Research of News Production

Differing from content analysis of news texts, ethnographic research, according to Schwartzman (1993:3), is “to learn about a culture from the inside out”. It is the only method which can record and make ‘behind-the-scenes’ news production visible (Cottle 2007:5). Paterson (2008:9) points out that the key attribute of ethnographic research is “direct and profound contact with the news workers, in most instances, their working environment and culture”. Compared with other methods of news production such as surveys and content analysis, ethnographic research has an unparalleled strength in helping researchers gain “basic information about the working ideologies and practices of cultural producers” (Schlesinger 1980:363) and “reveal the constraints, contingencies and complexities ‘at work’ and, in so doing, provide the means for a more adequate theorization of the operations of the news

⁹ For more details please see Appendix I Coding Schedule for TV News and Appendix II Coding Schedule for Online News.

media and the production of the discourses ‘at play’ within news media representations” (Cottle 2007:2).

Ethnographic studies of convergent journalism

Ethnographic research is by no means a new method in communication studies. After the ‘first wave’ studies of news production in the 1970s and the 1980s, ethnography has regained the interest of media researchers over the past decade (Cottle 2000). A batch of scholars (e.g. Boczkowski 2004a,b; Cawley 2008; Cottle & Ashton 1999; Hammond et al. 2000; Huang et al. 2006; Lawson-Borders 2003; Meier 2007; Quandt 2008; Silcock & Keith 2006) have seen ethnographic research as being an optimal method (Singer 2008) to understand convergence and crossmedia journalism via examining news practices, routines, and newsroom contexts. As Schwartzman (1993:4) points out that:

Ethnography requires researchers to examine the taken for granted, but very important, ideas and practices that influence the way lives are lived, and constructed, in organizational contexts. Because ethnographers are directed to examine both what people say and what people do, it is possible to understand the way that everyday routines constitute and reconstitute organizational and social structures.

To put it simply, ethnographic research in news production provides “a necessary corrective to grand speculative claims and theories about the news media” (Cottle 2007:1).

When using ethnography to study news practices in a convergent *broadcasting* newsroom, field observations and in-depth interviews of working journalists are two widely used qualitative techniques (Singer 2008:158), including Cottle & Ashton's (1999) observations in the BBC Newscentre, Singer's (2004) in-depth interviews with journalists at work in four convergent newsrooms in US and Quandt's (2008) large observational analysis in five German online newsrooms as discussed in the Literature Review chapter. Besides, field observations and in-depth interviews are also widely used by scholars who have conducted research on convergence in the *print* context, for example, Boczkowski's (2004a,b) 700 hours of observations on online newspapers' newsrooms and 142 interviews with online journalists and editors. It is noteworthy that most of the 'convergent journalism' and 'multimedia journalism' studies focus on media convergence in the *print* context rather than *broadcasting* newsrooms. The lack of study of a convergent, broadcasting newsroom is substantial (Erdal 2007b:53).

Research design for the ethnography in AJE's newsroom

In order to study the news production of AJE 'from the inside out' and 'provide a corrective to grand speculative claims' about convergence and crossmedia journalism, I employed both field observations and in-depth interviews as research techniques in the ethnography of AJE's newsroom.

During the two-week fieldwork research in September 2009 at AJE's newsroom headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I spent the first week observing the professional practices of the television team and the second week observing the web team. As television and online staffers of AJE worked together in a big, open newsroom, it was possible for me to hear and watch their cooperation in news production. In order to detect and document each professional practice in AJE's newsroom, observational diaries were written, photographs of the newsroom and videos of the newsmaking process were taken, and a map of work desks in the newsroom was drawn.

I chose to look for *professional practices* at the moment of going live rather than *routines* of breaking news production for the following two reasons. Firstly, I was not able to grasp many 'breaking moments' to draw a general map of breaking news production in my two-week stay in AJE's newsroom. Although Tuchman (1973) once stated news practitioners have routinized the unexpected events, for example, they have "beats", such as hospitals, police stations and town halls to get the latest news, breaking news is the unexpected 'sudden moment' and journalists respond differently to different breaking news situations. I was not 'lucky' enough to meet much breaking news within my two-week stay in AJE, thus failing to describe a general principle, or so-called routine of breaking news production. Secondly, my idea of looking for

professional practices rather than *routines* followed what Cottle (2003:16: 17) advocated - ethnographic research in the current “complex and more differentiated field of news production” needed “a conceptual shift from ‘routine’ to ‘practice’”. During the observation, I examined professional practices in the big contexts at the levels of organization and newsroom, including organizational strategies, technology access, spatial layout, manpower resources as well as newsroom culture. I assumed these contexts were not “separate analytical moments” but rather “mutually constitutive and interpenetrating” with professional practices, and journalists were more “consciously” and “knowingly” involved in the process of crossmedia journalism.

Despite the observations of professional practices, I conducted ten in-depth interviews with the front-line workers in the newsroom including newsroom managers, editors, anchors, reporters, graphic staffers, and online content producers. A question list¹⁰ was developed before the interviews and was amended in accordance with the position of each interviewee. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. In the open-ended interviews, journalists and editors were asked how they understood and implemented convergence in their daily professional practices, how they made breaking news across the two

¹⁰ For more details please see Appendix III: A List of Interview Questions.

platforms; and why they worked in that way. Not everyone participated in the interviews agreed to identify his/her name in this thesis.

Implications of a Multiple Method in News Production Studies

Both news products and practices have evolved since the Internet's entry into the news industry. Although most of the empirical studies of convergence have proved that traditional media organizations and journalists at work gave negative responses to developing taken-for-granted ideals, such as, interactivity, hypertextuality and crossmedia news production, these products are not unworthy of examination as they are evolving along with the news productions.

No research method is perfect for a given study because of the “the complexity of social reality and limitations of all research methodologies” (Snow & Anderson 1991:158). Specific to the news production studies, Cottle (2003:5) points out the need for multiple approaches to study news production and stressed that, “If we want to understand why media representations assume the forms that they do as well as the silences found within media discourse, we cannot rely upon readings of media texts alone, no matter how analytically refined and methodologically sophisticated these may be”. On the other hand, ethnographic research, which often proves invaluable as a corrective to speculative and abstract theories, has its blind spots (Cottle 2007). For

example, Curran (1989:144) criticizes the way in which ethnographic research “tends to obscure the way in which managerial pressures are brought to bear on journalists”. Cottle (2007:7) also warns ethnographers that they “must never assume their observations alone will necessarily capture the shifting and largely invisible play of cooperative power and editorial control”. A multiple method, sometimes described as *triangulation* (Denzin 1989), is therefore required.

This study combines the two research methods – content analysis of news products and ethnography in the newsroom to examine convergence and crossmedia journalism in AJE’s newsroom. It aims to not only make *textual* analysis of news products but also take the production *process* and *context* into consideration. Although each of the two methods has its weaknesses, together it is hoped they will provide a stronger basis on which evidence and findings about convergence and crossmedia journalism can be triangulated. The specific weaknesses of content analysis and ethnography in this study and the way the two are complementary to each other to detect the research question will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussions of Content Analysis

As stated in the last chapter, this content analysis of AJE's news products has two aims. The first is to investigate some measurable elements in order to answer the research question about liveness and convergence. The second is to clarify the necessity of conducting ethnographic research in the newsroom to follow the content analysis. Results from this content analysis showed that:

- 1) The interactivity between television and the website was limited as either the percentage of user-generated content aired on television or the percentage of the AJE-aired video clip published on the website was very low.
- 2) Television had a strong emphasis on live reporting as the sampled news programmes aired more stories containing a live element than they aired pre-recorded packages.
- 3) Online news items were released and updated at a fast pace, but a majority of them were text stories.
- 4) The website had a heavy reliance on news agencies.

5) Data collected from breaking news content did not reveal a pattern of breaking news production.

The content analysis provided a fresh and detailed description of the features of news content published on television and the website. The findings indicated that some features of convergent journalism, including interactivity, immediacy and multimedia were not extensively developed in AJE. However, the data collected in this content analysis could not explain why convergent journalism had developed in AJE in this way. The content analysis's limitation then came into view and will be discussed later.

This chapter firstly discusses the features of AJE's news content published on television and the website in terms of three main aspects, interactivity or multimedia, liveness or updatedness and sources. Then it focuses on the content of breaking news in both on-air and online versions and describes how journalists worked across television and the Internet when making breaking news. Finally, it discusses the advantages and drawbacks of the content analysis and points out the necessity of conducting ethnographic research in the newsroom.

Features of Television News

Interactivity, liveness and sources

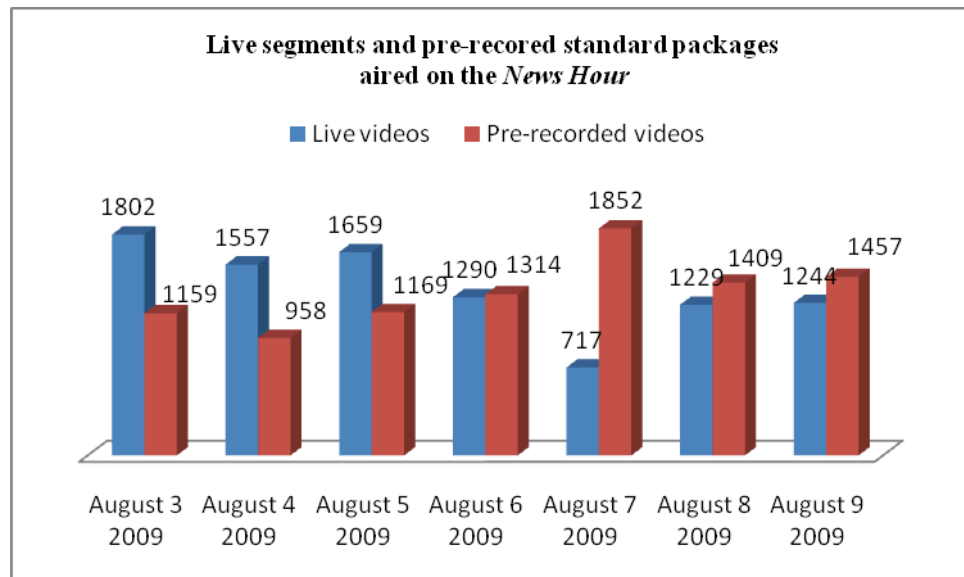
From 3 August to 9 August 2009, after removal of non-news items (i.e. routine weather, stock information, sports, advertisement breaks and headlines), a total of 118 pieces of news aired on *News Hour* were coded in accordance with Coding Schedule I (for more details please see the Appendix). Within the total sample of 118 pieces of news aired on television, only one piece of news used user-generated content. The news aired on August 5 covered the swearing in ceremony of Ahmadinejad as the President of Iran and contained a 216-second long video clip which was website-generated, making up only one per cent of the total length of the sampled news items (i.e. 17, 856 seconds). In front of the camera, a journalist opened the Twitter website and then inserted ‘Iran Election’ on Twitter’s search engine. He calculated the number of tweets on the topic – over 117 tweets came up within two minutes, clicked in and quoted tweeters’ comments, to demonstrate the international response to the results of the Iranian presidential election.

One ideal of online journalism is that online users are “prosumers” (Bruns 2008) of news, who not only receive information as consumers, but also disseminate it as producers. The internet has blurred the lines between producers and consumers of news content. In the news about the Iranian

election, the Twitter website was used by AJE as both source and content. The tweeters had some interaction with professional journalists when their comments and expressions were quoted in the news. However, it was unclear why the internet content was used once by AJE's traditional news outlet in the sampled days.

With respect to liveness, Figure 4.1 shows that television news had a strong emphasis on live reporting. The airing time of live video (i.e. a total of 9,498 seconds) exceeded the length of pre-recorded video packages (i.e. 9,318 seconds). The finding accorded with the result in Tuggle and Huffman's (2001) classic study on live reporting, arguing that "live coverage has become pervasive" in television news.

Figure 4.1: Length of live segments and pre-recorded standard packages in *News Hour*



When looking more closely at these live segments, it was found that not all of the live segments were presented at the time and at the scene when news stories were just unfolding. A majority of these live segments were not ‘truly live’, in Huxford’s terms. According to Figure 4.2, live presentation by reporters that originated in the field, in the newsroom and on the set, with a time length of 1,952 seconds, 378 seconds and 1,178 seconds, made up 56%, 11% and 33% respectively.

Figure 4.2: Locations of the live stand-ups

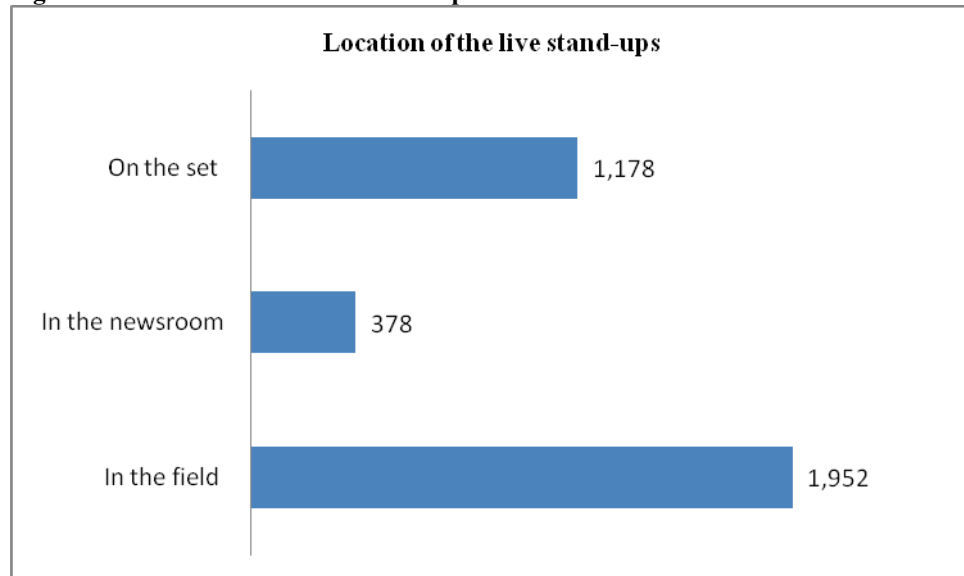


Figure 4.2 shows two features of the live reporting of AJE. First, reporters presented news much more often from the field rather than on set. The news channel made extensive use of its ability to go live in style rather than content. Reporters presented live from the field, which had little correlation with the ongoing news, gave a sense to viewers that “I am live right here right now”

rather than give the latest, new information. Such a feature of live news has aroused scholarly criticism over the gratuitous use of live technology in television news (Coleman & Wu 2006:7; Huxford 2007; Murrie 1998; Seib 2001; Tuggle et al. 2007; Watson 2005). Second, live interviews and discussions (usually between the anchor and guests) were a staple ingredient of the 24-hour news channel, taking up nearly fourteen per cent of broadcast time.

With respect to sources, results showed that 58 pieces of news (making up 49% of the total) were produced by AJE, while the sources of the other 60 were not clearly mentioned. Sources of news are only mentioned by an anchor or a correspondent when produced by AJE. Making an assumption in accordance with earlier studies on 24-hour news, the other 60 pieces of news was most probably sourced from agencies. It has been demonstrated that broadcasters worldwide rely heavily on video package feeds from AP and Reuters (Thussu 2002). However, this assumption cannot be proven by the analysis of news content. A more detailed analysis of news content, such as transcribing television news and recording sound-bites is the only way to detect who offered the news rather than who made the news.

Features of Online News

Multimedia, updatedness and sources

In the sampled time slot (09:00 GMT to 10:00 GMT when *News Hour* was on the air) from August 3 to August 9 2009, 147 pieces of online news were coded in accordance with Coding Schedule II (for more details please see the Appendix). Within the 147 pieces of on-line news, a majority of online news (114 pieces of news) was in text and/or graph format. Only 33 pieces of news (22%) were attached to video clip. But none of the attached videos matched the concerned text: video clips had the same topic as the concerned text, but were at least one day old when aired on television.

The results showed that the level of multimedia on AJE's website was low. Texts and still graphs were a staple of AJE's website. The reasons for the lower level of multimedia on the site were not totally clear. It might be technological limitations, newsroom routines, or management priorities. But, whatever the reason, this analysis shows that the level of multimedia was underdeveloped and the involvement between on-air and online products was limited.

With respect to updatedness, results indicated that news on AJE's website was updated at a fast pace, but a majority was text-based. Figure 4.3 showed that

the front page of AJE's website was updated at least once within an hour, with an updating frequency of 33 minutes per front page.

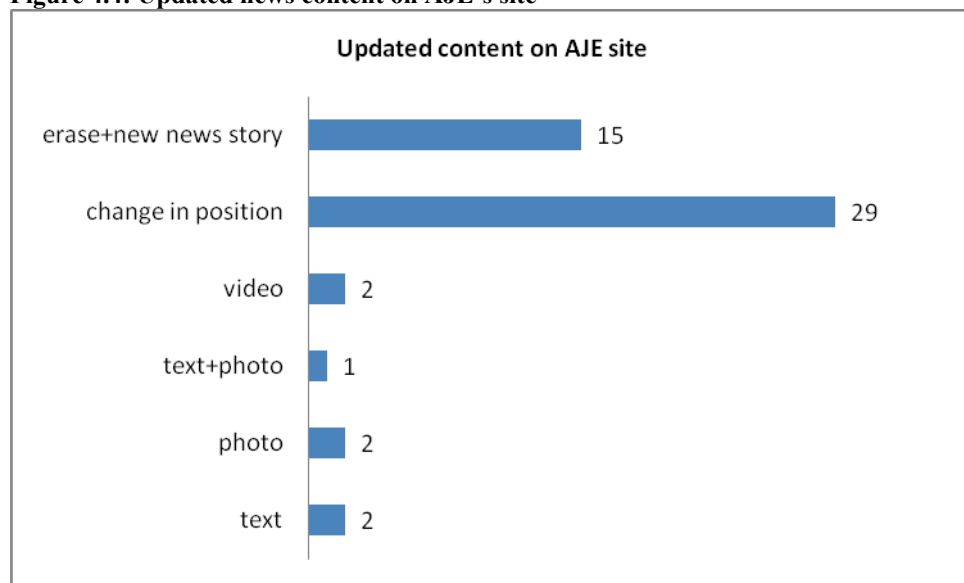
Figure 4.3: Updates of the front page on AJE's site in the time slot (09:00 -10:00 GMT)

Date of online news of AJE	Number of updated front pages of AJE site	Times of updatedness of news stories
August 3 2009	1	4
August 4 2009	2	8
August 5 2009	3	11
August 6 2009	1	7
August 7 2009	2	12
August 8 2009	2	2
August 9 2009	2	7

A superficial reading of Figure 4.3 would seem to suggest that the working efficiency of online editors was quite high. Yet, when we look more closely at what was updated, it became apparent that online editors paid much more attention to the website's layout and the updatedness in text form. Figure 4.4 showed that, within the total of 51 times of updating, 29 (56.9%) were 'change in position', meaning that the same news story just moved its position on the front page, with no editing or change of news content. Among the 15 pieces of newly added news, 12 pieces were in text and/or graph format. Added together, the updatedness in text and/or graph format numbered 17, making up 33.3% of

the total. The updatedness in video format only numbered five making up 9.8%.

Figure 4.4: Updated news content on AJE's site

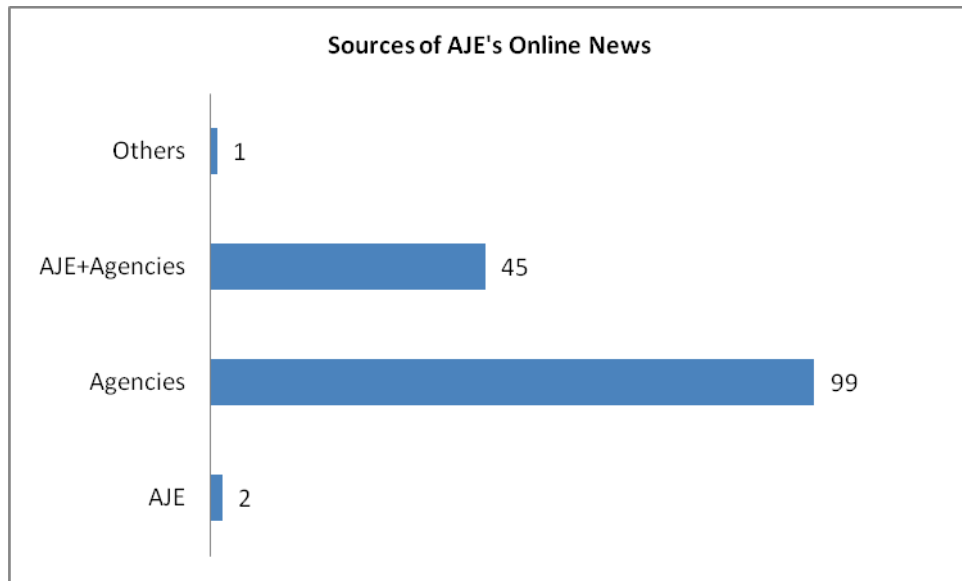


AJE's website was in a traditional, three-column format. On the front page, big stories (usually three per page) were put in the first column, displayed with a big-sized photo, title and headline info. In the second column, there were usually six pieces of news, represented by a small-sized photo and title. The third column usually included 12 pieces of news, with only the news title presented on the front page. There was no doubt that news positioned in the

first column could draw viewers' attention more easily than the other two. This could be the reason for online editors doing much work on changing the positioning of news. However, compared with other sites, the pull-down, three-column layout of AJE's website made it difficult to highlight breaking news and the latest updated items. Differently from AJE's site, CNN's site, for instance, splits the front page down the middle, with breaking news headlines on the left and the latest updated news (usually in video format) on the right, making it easier to find breaking news and the latest info.

With respect to sources, differently from television news, the source of online news was clearly noted in news text. Figure 4.5 showed that online news had a heavy reliance on news agencies. Among the total of 147 pieces of online news, 146 were agency-sourced, making up 98% of the total, while only two were AJE-self-produced. The results echoed Paterson's (2006) finding of an increasing momentum in using wire services on the Internet.

Figure 4.5: Sources of news on AJE's site



Three Cases of Breaking News

As the number of breaking news stories in the sampled calendar week was very small, each text of the stories was analyzed in detail. During the analysis, two points stood out, both of which punctured much of the taken-for-granted claims around breaking news. First, among the total 118 pieces of television news, there were only three pieces of news aired with a bright orange colored banner of 'BREAKING NEWS' on the screen. Breaking news formed a small part, only 2.6 per cent, of the sampled news programmes. However, the live news took up 50.5 per cent of the sampled news programmes. Second, none of the three pieces of breaking news aired live videos about the breaking events. Except for live presentation by reporters in the field and live links between a news anchor with a guest, all video images of the breaking news were pre-

recorded or just files. These two points both contradict the claim that satellite technologies enable more live coverage on breaking news worldwide.

After examining interactivity/multimedia, liveness/updatedness and sources of the breaking news coverage, it was found that the results kept in line with the previous results on AJE's news products as a whole. First, there was no sign of sharing content between television and its online counterpart: no video clip was attached to online coverage of the three breaking news stories; no user-generated content was aired on television. Second, live presentation by reporters and guests in the field was a fairly common form of television's coverage on breaking news, making up 48.6% of the total length of the three breaking news coverage. Also, television's coverage on breaking news was reliant on anchors. The anchors' live presentation in the newsroom, with no video inserted, took up 30.1%. Third, the source of television was still unclear while the online coverage of each of the three breaking news stories was agency-sourced.

In case 1 *Thai Plane Crash*, the news content showed one feature of the 24/7 news channel and its website in covering breaking news: the breaking news coverage was in a rolling process. As time went by, more facts of the event were released and the account became more accurate. The news published online at 08:37 GMT was quite sketchy – a plane had skidded off the runway,

in Koh Samui, on Tuesday afternoon, with approximately 70 passengers on board and unknown casualties and injuries. The facts aired at 09:07 GMT were more detailed, including the crash occurring because of heavy rain, with 68 passengers aboard, one of whom died. Facts of the event aired at 09:45 GMT were still more detailed and more accurate.

News releases at different times by television and the web showed an ongoing and reconstructing process of news coverage of the unexpected event. As Tuchman (1973:121) stated in the article ‘Routinizing the Unexpected’, news coverage of the unexpected event was a continual, ongoing process – “Since the plane crash was specifically unexpected, reporters were not present to record ‘facts’ ‘accurately’. ‘Facts’ must be reconstructed, and as more information becomes known, the ‘facts’ will be more ‘accurate’”. The previous definition of breaking news: ‘we have JUST broken into our regular news bulletin to bring people urgent information’, has already changed along with the prevalence of 24/7 news channels and the internet as both of them are available for live interruption at any time.

Case 2 US Hikers Detained in Iran and *Case 3 Indonesia Assault Noordin Mohammad Was Believed Dead* did not follow the rolling pattern of breaking news production shown in Case 1. The news *US Hikers Detained in Iran* was aired in a very short time, lasting for only 26 seconds. No live video was aired

and the news channel did not dispatch its correspondent to the scene. During the time slot (from 09:00 to 10:00 GMT when *News Hour* was on air), no updated information was aired. The website released more facts of the news event than its television counterpart, but it did not highlight the news as 'Breaking' as the television did. Case 3 was given the most time by television among the three cases, lasting for 320 seconds. Live presentation by an anchor in the newsroom and live link with a guest took most of its coverage, 84.1 per cent of the total. The television did not update the information during the time slot. No live video was aired and no correspondent presented live at the scene. The website treated the news event as an ordinary one without emphasis on its importance.

After recording the time of breaking news released on-air and online, results suggested that there was no strict rule of 'being first' to release breaking news between AJE's television team and the web team. In case 1, the breaking news *Thai Plane Crash* was first published on AJE site at 08:37 GMT and was updated once during the time slot. The television broke the news at 09:07 GMT, approximately 30 minutes later than the website. In case 2, the breaking news *US Hikers Detained in Iran* was firstly released on television. AJE's site did not cover the news during the time slot, but published an article with more detail two hours later. In case 3 the news *Indonesia Assault Noordin*

Mohammad Was Believed Dead was released on AJE's site at first, but there was no update online in the time slot. The different results shown from the comparison of television and the web's immediacy in making breaking news reminded us of the danger of claiming the immediacy of online media through its technological capacity.

The findings did not suggest that the AJE site failed to extend its ability in breaking news before its television counterpart. Rather, it aroused us to think more about the nature of breaking news. Television and the website covered breaking news in different ways. Take case 1 for example, when the anchor said 'let's bring you up to date now with some breaking news: the Thai domestic airliner, carrying 68 passengers, has crashed on the airport ...' at 09:07 GMT, the air crash *had* happened few hours earlier. AJE's site released the news nearly half an hour earlier, without signalling that it was JUST breaking. The news broke into the bulletin again at 09:46 GMT, with the banner of "BREAKING NEWS", but with no new information. The television team and the web team showed different understandings of breaking news: the former tended to use "breaking news" as a visual symbol to highlight the importance of news coverage, while the latter focused more on content in text form rather than visual elements.

Two weaknesses of this content analysis were revealed from the results. First, the sampling of television and online news published within one typical week was too small to find a pattern of breaking news production. Because the news network only aired three pieces of breaking news within the sampled week, I could not find the characteristics of breaking news production, such as how often the network ‘breaks in’, what types of stories are labelled ‘breaking’, and how the website makes breaking news. Second, to record online breaking news was also a challenge as it was sometimes released on the website in a flash and disappeared soon after. For example, a news ticker of one-sentence headline news could be published within seconds after an online editor received the breaking news information. The news ticker would ‘hang’ on the website for just a few minutes and then be substituted by a longer story. This sort of breaking news online was very difficult for researchers to grasp and record and there was almost no chance to retrieve it back after losing it. During the data collection, I kept refreshing the website by clicking the mouse dozens of times within the one-hour time slot. However, as recording data also needed time, I was not sure whether I missed any flashing news ticker or updates when copying and pasting the online news.

It is important to note that the weaknesses did not mean this analysis on news content failed to examine breaking news production across the two outlets.

Rather, this study on news content was successful in finding fresh data – because what I found from the content analysis did not fit what I had expected to see based on the literature. For example, the number of breaking news items published within a week on a 24-hour news channel was not as many as I expected before the analysis. Moreover, through the content analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of the ‘sudden’ and ‘unexpected’ nature of breaking news, both in television and online versions, which provided the baseline for my two-week fieldwork research in AJE’s newsroom - to examine the *practices* rather than the *routines* of breaking news production, as the latter required a longer time to study.

Summary

To sum up, this study on news content showed the different features of news products published from the two news outlets of AJE. It also paid special attention to breaking news content produced by the two news outlets of AJE. From the results, there was little indication that the internet had inherently brought great changes to news production in a broadcasting newsroom. Empirical data gained from this analysis broke some ideals of convergent journalism, including interactivity, immediacy and multimedia. Despite describing the features of news products, this content analysis left some why and how questions about convergence: Why was there little interactivity

between the television and its website? Why did the AJE site not fulfil its technological potential for immediacy or multimedia? When making breaking news, how did journalists and editors work across the two in data collecting, news editing and publishing? To answer these questions, ethnographic research is needed.

Chapter 5

Findings in Ethnographic Research

As stated in Chapter 3 (Methodology), the ethnography in AJE's newsroom aims to study news production 'from the inside out' and to provide a corrective to grand speculative claims about convergence and crossmedia journalism. Specifically, through examining both what people say and what people do in the newsroom, this ethnography aims to find the answers to some *why* and *how* questions generated from the results of the content analysis on news products in Chapter 4, including:

- 1) Why was there little interaction between television and the website?
- 2) Why did the AJE site not fulfil its technological potential for immediacy and multimedia?
- 3) When making breaking news, how did journalists work across the two outlets in sourcing, editing and publishing in the news production processes?

Answers to these specific questions provide more evidence and findings to explore the research question of this study: How do journalists work across the two media outlets in AJE's convergent newsroom, especially at moments of going live?

After watching and talking to AJE staff, there were differences in what I expected. Crossmedia journalism indeed happened in the daily news practices of journalists and editors at work, showing more evidence of cooperation and interactivity across the two news outlets than the results gained from the content analysis would suggest. However, cooperation and interactivity in news production, especially at moments of going live, were happening ‘exceptionally’ and ‘personally’ – journalists and editors at work had different responses to the implementation of convergent journalism in the newsroom. They embraced crossmedia journalism differently and these different crossmedia practices were influenced by a set of *external* and *internal* factors, including organizational commitment to convergence, spatial layout of the newsroom, technological accessibility, journalistic values of news production, newsroom cultural issues, training and investment, as well as individual expertise.

As stated in the Methodology chapter, this ethnography in AJE’s newsroom was designed to study professional practices across the two news outlets, and to test out prior studies on convergent journalism in AJE’s context. Singer (2004:3) once defined convergence as “a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media”. Singer’s concept of convergent journalism

was echoed by some researchers who examined the process of convergence in the big contexts at the levels of organization and newsroom. They examined the interrelationship between journalists' crossmedia practices with *digitalization of media and information technology* (Cottle & Ashton 1999), *organizational strategy* (Aviles et al. 2008; Cottle & Ashton 1999; Erdal 2007a; Singer 2004), *newsroom spatial layout* (Cottle & Ashton 1999; Meier 2007; Quandt 2008), and *newsroom cultures* (Boczkowski 2004b; Filak 2004; Silcock & Keith 2006; Singer 2004). Based on these prior studies which were discussed in the Literature Review chapter, this study examined crossmedia professional practices, especially at moments of going live, in the big contexts including AJE's organizational strategy, newsroom spatial layout, technology for live reporting, and newsroom culture.

Before showing the findings of this ethnography, I shall firstly describe some difficulties I encountered before and at the time the ethnography was carried out in AJE's newsroom. Secondly, I shall give an overview of AJE's strategic policies on convergence, the spatial layout of its newsroom and the latest technological gear for live reporting, to explore the organizational, geographical and technological influences on the process of convergent journalism in AJE's newsroom. Thirdly, I shall use three breaking news stories as cases to describe how AJE staff work across the two media outlets at the

moment of going live. Through the three cases, the difference in news values and the cultural conflicts between the two outlets in AJE will be discussed and some exceptional moments of developing crossmedia journalism will be highlighted. Lastly, I shall summarize this chapter and recount the key factors that influence the transition from mono-media to multi-media news production.

Difficulties in Conducting Ethnography in AJE's Newsroom

Access to newsroom and news practices, “the deciding factor” (Puijk 2008) for ethnography, is very difficult and time-consuming. When preparing for my fieldwork research, I listed both CNN and AJE as my cases to conduct a comparative study on convergence and crossmedia news production. I spent nearly three months contacting CNN, sending emails to each news programme in CNN's headquarters and branch bureaux, applying for an internship and calling their News Desk. Disappointedly, I received no reply from CNN. I contacted AJE in a different way, not starting ‘at the bottom’ but ‘at the top’. Luckily, I had a friend working as a Media Researcher at AJE's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. She was very kind and helped me ask permission from the Executive Manager to do my fieldwork research in the organization. I was asked to send my research proposal and interview questions to AJE and I received permission, two months after applying, from the Executive Manager

of AJE in Kuala Lumpur and the Head of Al Jazeera Centre for Studies in Doha.

Access to the newsroom plays a dominant role in studies of news practices. No access to CNN made me confine the research to a single case study rather than two cases for a comparative analysis. However, gaining physical access to a newsroom is just the first step. During the field work, I still needed to negotiate with the Executive Editor in the newsroom whether I could attend their daily editorial meetings, whom I could interview, when the targeted interviewee was available, and whether I could get copies of some raw materials of news, such as the original news copies written by a correspondent which had just arrived at the News Desk. Journalistic work was like a flux and I had to adapt my research design to the flux.

Digitization not only reconstructs the production and dissemination of news, but also brings challenges to a media ethnographer in data collecting and analysis (Puijk 2008). In AJE's newsroom, journalists, editors, news anchors and producers are connected by an internal post-production communication system. Except for daily editorial meetings at around 00:20 GMT, most editorial practices are carried out under this system, such as scripting and editing of news text, audio, video and rundown. Journalists and editors with a user ID can access the system: script and edit each piece of news, access

archives produced by AJE's four broadcasting centres, receive AP wire drops, and communicate with AJE correspondents and freelancers around the world via emails. I had a visitor ID and could not access that system. This was mostly because of concerns with news security. To access the post-production system needs certain expertise and a visitor without professional training could easily bring trouble to the editorial work. For example, an unconscious, small change to news could bring nightmares to the newsroom. The editor's workload is quite heavy everyday and deadlines are coming one after another, thus editors have no time to re-work their finished tasks. Without access to that system, I was confined to sitting beside an editor, who was always busy working and had little time to talk with me about what he or she was doing. I observed the fast-paced practices in that 'sophisticated' system and always kept quiet as I did not want to interrupt at the wrong time, and relied on the verbal discussions among editors. Sometimes, I found myself totally lost as to what they were doing and outside the communicative space the members of the production unit were part of.

Finally, and this will be explored a little further in the next section, the 'multisite' organizational structure of AJE made the individual ethnography difficult. AJE is honored for its networked broadcasting system in which its four broadcasting centres in Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington

DC cover the latest news in turn. News production at AJE does not take place in one newsroom but is dispersed across the four broadcasting centres and contributed to by AJE's correspondents scattered around the world. Therefore, it seemed to be a mission impossible for me to record and observe each work practice when there are "journalists and editors based in different locations but all working on the same story and all able to access, transmit and edit the same news materials" (Cottle 2007:9).

Examining Convergent Journalism in Big Contexts

Organizational strategies for crossmedia production

Because of the way that news companies are structured, it is commonly agreed that organizational strategy and top-down actions for convergence or crossmedia journalism are the key factors to propel the adoption of convergent journalism in the newsroom (Aviles et al. 2008; Cottle & Ashton 1999; Erdal 2007a; Singer 2004). After examining the different convergence models of six newsrooms in three countries, Aviles et al. (2008:12) pointed out the significance of organizational strategies for the development of convergence, stating that: "If there is no well-structured detailed analysis right from the beginning, it will be impossible to successfully establish new cooperation or further convergence processes. Changing convergence-strategies permanently may lead to unrest in the management as well as in journalistic staff and very

often provokes collateral damages instead of new cooperation and cross media perspectives.”

Before this ethnography, I read through corporate profiles of the network and looked for its strategic policies for convergence. I learned that the network has a consistent strategy for developing multi-media news products. Al Jazeera started its ‘Twitter Strategy’ shortly after Twitter was launched in 2006 (BilpTV 2009). Its correspondents and editors ‘tweet’ with viewers from all parts of the world to gather news information and news anchors ‘tweet’ live with viewers as the news programme is aired. AJE set up its own channel on YouTube in April 2007 (Meikle 2009:167), thus people with internet access can watch its programmes online. The network also partnered with LiveStation for internet-based broadcasting, which enabled viewers to watch its news programmes live worldwide. Moreover, the network’s Mobile team also strove to expand its audiences worldwide via Arabic and English language SMS, MMS and live streaming content. Until 2008, over 40 mobile platforms worldwide carried Al Jazeera Mobile (Stensgaard 2008). It could be learned from these black-and-white strategies that the network had a ‘multi-platform’ plan for drawing the scattered audiences worldwide with different demands for media consumption. Now, the network, with 69 bureaux across the globe, most of them in developing countries and a staff of more than 1,000

of 50 nationalities (Lupick 2010), has reached about 150 million households around the world, and its website draws much larger audiences than that (Interview with Taahir).

During the ethnography, I asked both the managerial staff and the grassroots journalists about the network's strategic plan for implementing convergence, and received the following interesting responses: "I am not sure. You'd better ask for the online staff", said a manager of Al Jazeera Asia-Pacific. "I am not clear. I suggest you ask for more information from the managerial staff", said an online editor. During the interview, the manager stressed the crucial effect of AJE's website with respect to audience expansion, "Al Jazeera takes its web seriously and we do believe that the future of news is on the web. More and more people are looking for the website, especially younger people". One online editor said, "There is a commitment from the bosses [of AJE] to move towards a greater convergence, such as cross-training of journalists and producers, to make them aware that, OK, you do this for TV, you should also do this for the web and vice versa". However, neither of them gave me a clear statement of the network's strategy for convergence.

This suggested to me that: 1) both the black-and-white strategies for convergence I found before the ethnography and the words of the managerial staff showed the company's commitment to developing *convergence in*

products rather than *convergence in production*. Convergence in production should involve journalists at different media outlets and re-locate them to work together, while convergence in products, or to say it more clearly, the multimedia products could be produced by separate groups without any coordination. 2) Although the network has a set of top-down strategies for convergence, it is implicit that these strategies have not reached everyone in the KL newsroom, and is not central to the way people in the newsroom think about their jobs. The effect of a clear strategy of convergence can only be seen when the grassroots journalists and editors in the newsroom accept it and adopt it.

Spatial layout of AJE's newsroom headquartered in Kuala Lumpur

To understand the way the newsroom operates, it is important to see how it is structured and divided up, as convergence is discussed in the literature as having an impact on just this kind of division of tasks. Newsrooms are both social and physical spaces. The occurrence of newsroom practices is dependent on the available space resources, so the relationship between the spatial layout of newsroom and work practices is recursive (Quandt 2008:79). Meier (2007:6) examined convergent newsrooms and found that the big, open newsroom has become quite popular among news organizations worldwide as it offers “a new way of structure and workflow as well as a

new way of thinking and acting journalistically”. Take the BBC Newscentre for example, in the late 1990s, the BBC reconfigured from “the typical TV newsroom layout organized in terms of linear processing, input and output sections and so on ” to “a more open, less linear design (that) characterizes the functions and social arrangements within the newscentre, arrangements that express the BBC’s pursuit of corporate multi-media production” (Cottle & Ashton 1999:31:32).

AJE’s newsroom¹¹ is located on the 60th floor of the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur. The building gathers the world’s top business companies and access to the building is strictly controlled. During my two-week stay at AJE, at the building entrance, I needed to show my passport to the receptionist, register my name and the place I was staying at, and pass the security check entrance everyday. Upstairs, the elevator opened revealing a glass door in which the channel’s logo, Arabic script in the shape of a flame, was etched. Al Jazeera means “the island” or “the peninsula” and refers to the shape of Qatar where the channel was founded. Security staff checked my ID again and opened the door for me.

Past the entrance was the newsroom which was modern, big and open. Journalists and editors at work were full of hustle and bustle gathering

information and editing news. They were busy but quiet as news anchors were presenting on-air news bulletins in the same newsroom. There were no physical barriers between different news departments or desks except the MCR¹² and the Gallery¹³ where separate offices were needed for sound insulation and news security. The newsroom was set up in segments. People working on the same beat sat together (three or four persons), such as programme editors, producers, planning department, satellite desk and online editors, so that they could easily coordinate their work. All of these desks were located near the News Desk, where incoming news information was analyzed, filtered and distributed to various desks and journalists. On my first day at AJE's newsroom, the operator on the News Desk told me that, "We are the 'eyes and ears' of the news bureau. We import the daily news information from different outlets, agencies, television and radio channels, websites, and our correspondents. Whatever we think is newsworthy, we send to editors. They also drop in here to get the latest information".

¹¹ For photos of the newsroom please see Appendix IV.

¹² MCR is the abbreviation for master control room. It is the technical hub of the network. MCR is the final point before news is to go on air. Master control operators are responsible for monitoring the quality of and accuracy of the on-air products.

¹³ The Gallery is also called the production control room. Distinct from MCR, the Gallery is the television studio where the activities such as switching from camera to camera

Compared with its television counterpart, the web team took up a very small amount of space in the newsroom. They sat together on four desks on the right side of the newsroom. Its human resource was also small: four online editors in total in the KL newsroom. Usually, the web team had two or three persons at work: one was the senior editor, who was responsible for each online news item published on the AJE site; the other two wrote and edited online news and uploaded video clips on Al Jazeera's channel on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/AlJazeeraEnglish>). As shown in Chart 1, the location of the web team was separated from the television team. Significantly, the web team was not 'very close' to the hub of television news production – the News Desk. The location of the web team played a big part in the crossmedia news production in the newsroom and will be discussed in the following section.

In some successful convergent newsrooms as discussed in the Literature Review chapter, to establish 'symbols' of convergence, such as a multi-media desk is one of the first steps to introduce convergence in the newsroom (Quinn 2005b:202). However, I did not find any 'symbol' of convergence in the AJE's newsroom except its open structure with no barriers between television and the online team. The News Desk could not be called a 'symbol' for

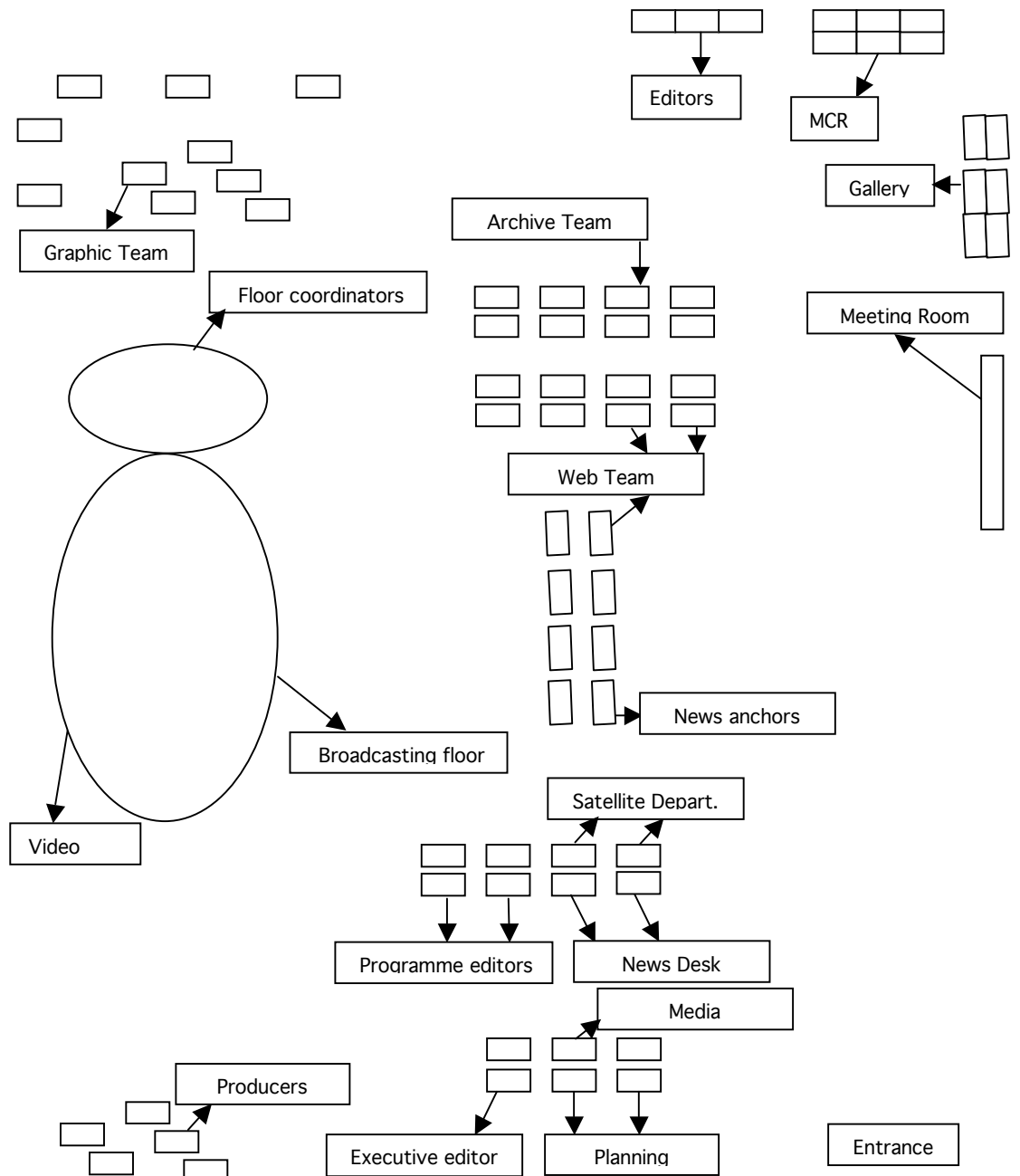
are coordinated. The gallery operators are called directors, who make the last-minute

convergence because most of its tasks were for the television. It did not participate in the production processes of online news. We can also see from Chart 1 that, there was a desk named 'Media Coordinator' behind the News Desk. When I asked about his job, the Media Coordinator Gary told me, "I work like a postman". Gary's job was to receive and send material in video format, with most of it for television. Although titled "Media Coordinator", Gary was not involved with the coordination(s) across the two news outlets in AJE.

Another distinctive geographical feature of AJE's newsroom, although it could not be seen from Chart 1, was that it was not self-contained but had close connections with the main headquarters in Doha and the other two broadcasting centres. Via computers and the internet technology, news resources were shared among the four broadcasting centres. This contrasted with the spatial layout of media offices in the 1970s, which were small, separated offices to "reflect different editorial subjects and sections, thereby fostering (their) journalistic autonomy" (Wilke 2003). The spatial layout of AJE's newsroom in KL and its connections with the other three centres implied the network's willingness to promote horizontal cooperation(s) between its newsrooms scattered around the world.

decisions on news rundown and insert live feeds.

Chart 1: AJE's Newsroom in Kuala Lumpur



Technological equipment for live reporting by AJE correspondents

As mentioned in the Literature Review chapter, in the earliest empirical research on the process of convergent journalism in the BBC NewsCentre, Cottle & Ashton (1999:26) argued that scant attention had been paid to “the role of technology within news production” and thus called for “theoretically informed, detailed empirical studies of particular news operations”. As digitalisation and new communication technologies are all contributing to changing professional practices (Cottle & Ashton 1999:22), empirical research on the technological influences has been placed at the forefront of the studies on convergent journalism. As the focus of this study was on the crossmedia news production at moments of going live, the examination of the technological equipment of AJE was therefore specifically to look for the latest changes in news technology for live reporting.

Microwave and satellite trucks are no longer suitable facilities for live reporting. Sending TV back via a satellite phone is nothing new. Instead, a mini-laptop with a BGAN Terminal and a smaller lightweight camera are the new necessary gear used by the AJE’s correspondents to make live feeds on the field. The correspondent firstly uses the laptop to transmit roughly-edited live feeds to the BGAN terminal - a tiny item with the size of a hardback book,

then the terminal sends signals through satellite to the servers of AJE, and in the newsroom, these live feeds can be easily down-linked and recorded. AJE was the first media organization to use the BGAN service in the world (AJE 2009). Before its adoption in AJE's newsroom in mid 2009, the correspondents needed to look for a broadcasting newsroom which had access to satellite signals for video transmission, but now they can do it easily on the field. "This revolution in technology has allowed many more journalists of the network to be out in the field, to the most remote, most dangerous and most important areas in the world, and to send live feeds for the network", said Rizal, the team leader of KL MCR during the interview.

Working with the new internet tools also facilitated the journalists' potential for going live as they could get more information at a faster speed. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, AJE's newsroom in KL was networked by computers. Each desk was equipped with a television with access to every satellite news service worldwide, a computer with a broadband connection and a telephone subscribed with Skype. Take the News Desk for example, on the right side there was a computer with two screens, with one for receiving the constantly updated wire news (in text form) and the other for checking emails and searching news information on the internet. Under the computer screens, six small-sized screens stood in line, airing news programmes sourced from

agencies and television channels, such as AP, Reuters, CNN and the BBC World. On the left side there was a normal television which was ready to receive any television news with a satellite signal. Besides, a big black telephone was squeezed in the middle next to the computer keyboard. There was no doubt that these tools had accelerated the journalists' speed in data collection.

The above discussions about AJE's organizational strategies for convergence, newsroom spatial layout and the technological equipment for live reporting provided a 'helicopter' view of the *external* factors for the adoption of convergent journalism in AJE's newsroom. Two points appeared after observing these factors. Firstly, it is seemed that the managerial staff of AJE has embraced enthusiastically the concept of convergence as it saw it as a way to reach more of the audiences scattered by media fragmentation. The network's top-level commitment to convergence could be seen from a set of corporate strategies for providing multimedia news products; the network's training plan for crossmedia storytelling; the modern, open and internet-connected design of its newsrooms; as well as the corporate pioneering efforts in introducing new technologies for live reporting. Secondly, it was also shown that the corporate commitment to convergence has not reached every journalist and editor at work. Although the network has a set of development

plans for *multimedia products*, neither the managerial staff nor the grassroots journalists were clear about how to implement them in *news production processes*. The online team was separate from its television counterpart even though the two stayed in one open newsroom, and there was no ‘symbol’ of convergence in the newsroom.

When providing suggestions to media managers who were thinking about introducing convergence into newsroom, Quinn (2005b:201) noted that, “It is implicit that any company’s decision to adopt convergence journalism will come from management. But any application needs to be driven by the editorial team”. Quinn’s words implied that the editorial team should go beyond the above-mentioned external factors and play an *internal* role in the process of adopting convergent journalism in the newsroom, as it was this team that is involved with news content, which lies at the ‘heart’ of implementing convergent journalism. The essential part of any changes in journalism is content, rather than the distribution methods. The next section will have a close look at these internal factors for the changes in news production.

When News Is Breaking...

Klinenberg (2005:54) once described news production in the digital age as a “news cyclone” where there was always breaking news to produce. The advent

of satellite and the internet technologies eliminated the previous temporal borders of the news day and brought the 24-hour news concept to every news outlet. As AJE's newsroom had two outlets that were both capable of offering breaking news around the clock and in real time, I had the expectation before the ethnography that: the shared technological capability and the paralleled news production could generate more involvement, both cooperation and competition, between the two media outlets. However, when observing news operation and journalists' work practices in AJE's newsroom and breaking news in particular, I found – not surprisingly – that things were far from technologically determined. A set of internal factors, including the values of news production, newsroom cultures and individual expertise were playing a bigger role in the implementation of crossmedia journalism in AJE.

In order to demonstrate these findings, I recount three news stories as cases, describe how journalists and editors worked across television and the Internet when the news events were just breaking, and show what cooperation and competition were underway between the two outlets in news production processes. In the first case *Indonesia Earthquake*, the two news outlets produced the news in different ways and showed different sets of values of news production. In the second case *Xinjiang Syringe Attack*, both of the two outlets showed a 'stop-watch culture' through their heavy reliance on agencies

and high content repetition in a rolling news format. Some cultural conflicts between the two outlets were also revealed. The third case *Iran Election* was highlighted by the two teams as a good example of convergence but it also indicated that crossmedia cooperation happened conditionally in the newsroom and individual expertise sometimes decided its happening.

Case 1: Different values of news production

News Background JAKARTA, Indonesia – A powerful underwater earthquake shook southern Indonesia on Wednesday, damaging buildings near the epicenter and causing panicked office workers to run onto the streets more than a hundred miles (160 kilometers) away in the capital, Jakarta, witnesses and local media said.

A tsunami alert was issued, but revoked less than an hour later.

The quake struck at 2:55 p.m. (0755GMT) on the southern coast of the main island of Java with a preliminary magnitude of 7.0. It had a depth of around 30 miles (50 kilometers), the U.S. Geological Survey said.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said it was powerful enough to cause a local tsunami, but there were no immediate reports of high waves. Less than an hour later it said in a statement that "sea level readings indicate a significant tsunami was not generated" and retracted the alert.

- Sourced from AP writer Deutsch (2009)

The earthquake happened at 07:55 GMT and caused chaos for nearly an hour in the newsroom, especially on the television side. At the time the earthquake was happening, an AJE correspondent in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia

called the News Desk and reported that she could feel the earth shaking. A couple of minutes later, the operator on the News Desk saw the wire drops. Because of the Indonesian Tsunami Disaster in 2004, newsmen believed that another earthquake happening might cause a tsunami again and thereby must be a 'big' breaking news story. Each desk on the television side spared no effort to gather information: the News Desk operators were recording a local TV channel which was airing the aftermath of the earthquake in the Indonesian language, keeping an eye on the latest updates on news wires, and contacting correspondents and eyewitnesses via Skype; a producer was calling her friends in Jakarta and asking them to find some eyewitnesses who could speak good English; a programme editor was working on scripts with the newly updated and confirmed information, and she also asked the correspondent to send pictures. The Graphic Team was drawing a map of the earthquake-hit area; the planning department was busy looking for someone who could be a guest on tomorrow's developing stories; the executive producer Marcus was considering deploying a correspondent to Java to do a live feed. Later, he decided not to deploy as the number of the casualties was still unclear at that time and the degree of damage was not 'that big' (as the tsunami had been proved not to have happened).

The chaos did not spread to the web team. No phone rings, no talking of the earthquake, no video packages. Among a total of three online editors on a rota that day, only one worked on the news about the Indonesian earthquake. The editor received the news from his television colleagues who shouted out the story, inserted 'Indonesian Earthquake' on the search engine of the news wire services, got the news and released a news ticker on the site, saying "*Breaking News: An earthquake struck on the southern coast of the main island of Java with a preliminary magnitude of 7.0. More soon...*" Then, he re-purposed the news on the basis of the news wires. Later, when the Graphic Team completed the map, he dragged and pasted it on the texts and published it. No video clip was attached to the texts.

Compared with the web team, the television team had a much heavier workload and involved more people in covering the news event. It spent nearly two hours gathering and double-checking the information and at least ten journalists and editors were involved. From 08:00 to 09:30 GMT, the television channel published two reports on the news story. It first released a short, brief report visualized with a couple of still pictures and a moving map¹⁴ detailing the earthquake-hit area. Later, longer, more detailed coverage on the

¹⁴ A moving map is a map can be zoomed in and out to show a specific area on the map. It is usually used on television news for covering live, breaking news such as typhoons and earthquakes.

issue was aired, visualized with video footages sourced from a local TV channel of Indonesia and a pre-recorded stand-up by a correspondent in Jakarta. None of the aired news contained live feeds from the scene or showed a “BREAKING NEWS’ banner on the screen.

Before showing what I learned from the observations on how journalists produced the news, it is necessary to note that what I saw in the newsroom was not a complete picture of the news production process of AJE. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the KL newsroom is connected and coordinated with other three broadcasting centres and they broadcast news in turn. The broadcasting time of the KL newsroom is usually from 04:00 to 08:30 GMT. Then, it hands over the news work to Doha headquarters. Newspersons in KL newsroom usually finish their work around 09:30 GMT. Because of the geographical constraints, I was only able to observe the work practices which happened in the KL newsroom. Of course, the news production of that story, both of television and online, continued to be operated by Doha headquarters. But I had no access to observe them thus could not offer a whole range of detailed descriptions of how newspersons worked on that news.

Broadcasters' Value of News Production

As the chaos passed by, I had a chance to ask whether there were some editorial accounts of no 'truly' live reporting on the news event, and one editor told me informally, "No big, crazy issue, no live report". The executive editor stopped him and turned to me, saying: "Yes, that's true. But don't write this down in your research". Then he laughed, with other television staff. I could learn from their words that: the television had a set of values of going live and the *visual* value was one of the most important. Just as when the person said "No big, crazy issue, no live report", the news event which could be described as 'big' and 'crazy' should be visually impressive and thus deserved to be covered live. However, this value was not an editorial standard that was clearly recorded on paper. It was commonly agreed by television people and was flexible to be adapted when they went live. The flexibility could be seen in the words of some television people as follows:

*TV is all about presentation as well as content*¹⁵. If someone like me decides whether or not to take James [AJE's correspondent dispatched by the network to cover news in Afghanistan], you have to take into account several factors - the importance of the story, the location of the correspondent, the new value added content he can bring to the show, and what he can say and how he can say it, and how it complements the rest of the stuff you're doing, and also, the quality of the correspondent. So my decision is based on all those things (a Television News Editor).

¹⁵ The italics represent my emphasis.

I think, every news outlet has its own reasons for going live with certain things, and not with others. At Al Jazeera, we are trying not to go live with something for the sake of it. We'd look at the significance of an event, how much value we can add to a story, and also if it goes along with our agenda. You know, our agenda is to give voice to the voiceless. It's a developing world's agenda. ...The choice each network makes, none of them is wrong but they pursue their mandate as they set it in the newsroom (a News Anchor).

It could be learned from these words that the television team followed a dual standard of live reporting. First, the visual and sound qualities were important as TV was about presentation. Second, besides visuals and sounds, television people also took other values into consideration, such as the organizational agenda, the importance of news and the news content, as TV was *not just* about presentation. This set of values for live reporting contrasts with some media observers' criticism stating that there was a tendency in the television news industry to go live when there was no journalistic reason for it (Coleman & Wu 2006:7; Huxford 2007; Murrie 1998; Seib 2001; Tuggle et al. 2007; Watson 2005).

Although it was taken seriously, live reporting was hailed by the television team. It saw liveness as a way to bolster the audience's interest and distinguish the channel in its market.

It is essential to what we do. ... The existence of 24-hour news channels means that you have the capacity to cover the events when they happen. That's why viewers turn to 24-hour news

channels. You know, you don't have to wait until 7 pm and 8 am bulletins. So, if something happened somewhere in the world, you can switch on and there it is. So here we try to incorporate breaking news, live coverage as much as we possibly can in all our bulletins. (News Executive Producer)

In news, everybody wants live feeds. It's not going live for the sake of live. Live reporting is something to prove the importance of AJE. For example, AJE was the first to do live reports on the Myanmar Crackdown. Agencies and TV stations around the world used our footage. Television is visual and live news is vital. (Team Leader of MCR)

Online Staff's Value of News Production

Differently from the television team, the web team did not follow this dual standard when they covered breaking news. When I talked with online editors about their jobs, they said that the main task of the web team was to offer content which was "different" and "extra" from the television news, with "more in-depth" and which could arouse "interactivity" from the audience:

We upload a video [on the site]. You are not 'reading' the video. We get to play a *different* angle, or a *more in-depth* look at certain things that there isn't enough time to explore on TV. The main thing the web to offer that TV doesn't offer is *interactivity*.

The correspondents who are keen [for online news], they are able to give us something *extra*. What we are looking for is, you know, what viewers cannot find on TV, they can come to look for our site and get a bit more *in-depth*.

It could be learned from the above words that: the web team valued different issues from those of the television team to some extent. The web team wanted

to provide more “extra” information and to be more “interactive” than its television counterpart. However, it seemed that the online editors talked more on this issue rather than did it. Within my one-week stay with the web team, I could not see much of their work on “extra” or “interactivity”. Rather, they spent most of their time on fine-tuning news texts from wire services and breaking the news. They broke the news quickly on the web, sometimes much more quickly than the television. They gave priority to the latest news and worked on other news when they had time. So clearly, breaking news was a value for the web team, but it was not the one that they talked about a lot. The online editors lacked clarification of what values were motivating their practices. Although their main work was on breaking news, they were not clear how important breaking news was to them.

Lack of time for online news production was discussed in many empirical studies on online journalism. For example, after conducting a large observational analysis in five German online newsrooms, Quandt (2008:84) argued that the changing deadlines kept online journalists regrouping, editing and fine-tuning news agency stories rather than writing or reporting. I also asked the online editors in AJE whether they would require their correspondents to write different stories for them, to add anything “extra” or more “in-depth”. They told me that:

We try, but not all correspondents are happy with that. ...That's in theory, but in reality, it is another thing. Sometimes they just adjust a little bit, but that's not so useful for us. They are often unable to do something extra.

From Case 1, we could see that journalists working for the two news outlets had different sets of values of news production. As “the television was all about presentation and content”, good visuals was one of the most important values in its news production. The web team, lacking in human and time resources, was not able to work more on their ideals – to offer ‘extra’, ‘in-depth’ and ‘interactive’ content. Instead, online editors were pushed by continual deadlines to break news as the wire services did. No shared values in making breaking news provided a sign that crossmedia practices would be limited.

Case 2: ‘Stop-watch’ culture and cultural conflicts of the two outlets

News Background Chinese authorities have stepped up security in Urumqi, capital of the western region of Xinjiang, following a day of protests by thousands of residents angry over a string of alleged syringe attacks.

Thousands of soldiers and paramilitary police were deployed on the city's streets on Friday (September 4, 2009), leaving many streets deserted and businesses closed.

On Thursday thousands of protesters, mostly from the city's ethnic Han Chinese majority, took to the streets to demand increased security following reports of a spate of stabbings with hypodermic syringes.

The protesters say the alleged attacks have been carried out by members of the indigenous Muslim Uighur community, although Uighur leaders say members of their community have also been targeted in the attacks.

-Sourced from AJE

In his analysis on the news production of live reporting, Schlesinger (1999(1978):121-122) pointed out that it was important to examine the particular system of live reporting in two contexts: “the occupational culture of the broadcasting journalist in daily production” and “the market for news in a capitalist society”. According to Schlesinger (1999(1978):121-122), the occupational context in the newsroom of live reporting was featured in a “stop-watch culture”, in which broadcasting newsmakers were obsessed with the passage of time, exactingly time-conscious, and “travel[ling] along an astonishingly fast time track”. Compared with other occupations, newsmen’s work, especially that related to live reporting, was probably “pathologically time-regulated”. The following case will examine the pressurized culture in AJE’s newsroom and look for cultural conflicts between the two outlets, especially at moments of going live. After taking a close look at how journalists worked on the news story – *Xinjiang Syringe Attack*, two similar features in news production of the two outlets were revealed: heavy reliance on news agencies and high repetition of news content. The pressurized culture

with particular emphasis on temporality was demonstrated well in these two features.

Before discussing of this further, it is important to note that the pressurized culture was involved with almost everyone and every moment in the newsroom, and not just shown in Case 2 alone. The pressurized culture was covered a little in Case 1 in the description of the hustle and bustle works of television people and will be highlighted in this case and discussed in detail.

‘Stop-watch’ Culture in the Newsroom

In AJE’s newsroom, journalists’ emphasis on time could be physically seen from almost everywhere and heard from everyone in the newsroom. “Every news needs a clock to run. So we go by GMT”, one editor noted to me. On the wall at the right side of the newsroom, there were eight clocks, showing different times in different zones worldwide. In the rooms of the MCR and Gallery which were full of television screens on the walls, every screen showed the time. As news anchors presented news in the same newsroom, the countdowns for time such as “Thirty seconds left, quiet please!” could be heard every half an hour in the newsroom in the KL broadcasting time. Besides, journalists were very cautious when talking about time and usually double checked on whether the time they were talking was GMT or local time.

As the city in which the syringe attack happened was my hometown, I paid much attention to AJE's reports on that news story. *Xinjiang Syringe Attack* was the headline news on television and AJE's website on September 4 and 5. The television team did not make at-the-scene live feeds for the news story. It relied on video packages sourced from agencies for some external reasons. Since the ethnic riots happened in Xinjiang, China in July, the Chinese government had set very strict control on the access of foreign media to the region. Although AJE had correspondents in Beijing, its cameraman did not have accreditation for Xinjiang. Thus, there was no point in sending the cameraman because he might be arrested and AJE's bureau in Beijing might be banned from reporting.

I feel quite upset because we don't have someone there, but CNN and the BBC have someone there and they are sending their own reports from Urumqi there. ...In this instance, I think, if we could, we would have sent. But we can't because we don't have a cameraman with accreditation (a television news editor).

If there were some practical reasons for the television's dependence on agencies, the reason for the web could be just accounted for by what Domingo (2008:116) argued, "Most of the work routines in traditional media online newsrooms were shaped around the choice of immediacy. Journalists tried to publish a story as soon as possible and news agencies wire services were the perfect source for that purpose". When I asked for the sources of online news,

an online editor told me that: “Correspondents, wire services and the websites were the main sources”. But he also said that: “Breaking news is not possible without the agencies. We cannot live without agencies. An overwhelming number of stories come from agencies”.

The 24-hour news channel had an insatiable appetite for content and the relentless demand for content generated two results: non-stop updates and high repetition of news material. Take the television news of Case 2 for example, in the news bulletin from 04:00 to 04:30 GMT, the anchor made a live phone link with the correspondent in Beijing. In the next bulletin, starting from 05:00 GMT, some fresh, new pictures about the protest were added. Then, in the bulletin starting from 07:00 GMT, most of the information was repeated while again adding some fresh information, such as the fallout from the protest.

This is rolling news. We are rolling the stories, always looking for something new. You can repeat certain things but you need to move the story along (a Television Senior Editor).

It’s the feature. And it’s both good and bad, you know, it is good in one sense because it keeps it exciting for the viewers. And it is bad in another sense because sometimes you are struggling to find something new, and put on something new that may not even be very worthy (a Television Senior Editor).

Similarly to their television counterparts, the online editors were busy updating news to fill the 24-hour news hole. On average at least two dozen fresh stories were updated in each 24-hour news cycle (interview with an online editor).

The online news was also run in a rolling format – headline, hard news first, detailed information next and comments and features at last.

If a story breaks, our immediate action is to get it up within minutes - a very short story on that. Actually, the first thing we do is to put up a breaking news ticker. Usually that means we were working on the full story but meanwhile using the Breaking News [banner]. So then we put it up progressively: breaking news, then headlines, then we put up maybe four paragraphs and then we build the story, add voices to it, guests whatever. It might take an hour, or even two to three hours for the full story to settle down.

Besides the heavy reliance on news agencies and relentless demand for news content, one difference in news production of the two outlets came into view. In news publishing, online news could be published after a one-layer check of information while television news needed several layers. Each time the senior online editor finished a run at a story, he published the updates directly himself. The demarcation of news production in the television side – news gathering, scripting, editing, cross-checking, presenting and broadcasting, did not apply here.

When the stories come to me, the sub-editors edit it and I look at it. If I am happy with it, then just publish it. In KL newsroom, usually it is one layer of check. In Doha, they have more people, so usually they have two layers.

Heavy reliance on news agencies, immediate response to breaking news, continuous publication of a news story and a one-layer check before publishing were the characteristics of online news production in AJE and these

features demonstrated that the online people were working under great pressure of meeting deadlines. However, this was nothing new in other convergent newsrooms. Brannon (2008:99) examined online newsrooms in the US and found that “on the web, breaking news has become a new kind of service journalism, with digital teams feeling the responsibility to be reactive like a wire service”. Quandt (2008) also pointed out that the phenomenon that online news could and was actually published in just a few minutes was the main characteristic of work in online newsrooms while not being mentioned very often in the literature of online media.

Cultural Conflicts between Television and Online

Scholars (Boczkowski 2004b; Filak 2004; Silcock & Keith 2006; Singer 2004) who studied the interrelation between convergence and newsroom culture(s) often noted the cultural differences among different media platforms were the biggest hurdle in adopting convergent journalism. For example, Silcock & Keith (2006:610) argued that different broadcasting and print newsroom cultures, which stemmed from the different embedded work routines, were “detrimental” to the adoption of newsroom convergence. They found that cultural differences could generate bias and stereotyping among journalists and editors working for different media outlets, thus “limit[ing] the effectiveness of convergence” (Silcock & Keith 2006:614). After talking to

television and online people of AJE, I learned that: although the cultural conflicts between the two outlets in AJE were not as overwhelming as those between television and print staff, an ignorance of how the other outlet operated existed in the two teams, and the online people had suspicions that they were sometimes regarded as lower class.

When I asked the Executive Producer (EP) what the relationship was between the two teams and who had the priority to publish breaking news stories, he told me that:

Well, the television side does, at the moment, in terms of the access to the correspondents and things like that. I mean our web team members are good and they will update almost at the same time as TV. But we work along side each other. ... Now we are putting our correspondent to where, the web team will be listening to what they would have to say, and then they would be able to write them up, and post it on the website. So the two things should have happened concurrently rather than us grabbing hold of our correspondents and the web team being unable to report on it until we were done. We cannot work hand in hand rather than separately.

The EP's words produced a sense of two points. Firstly, the television team had more priorities in news production. As the correspondents were dispatched for television news, the work of online editors was limited to "listen to what they would say", "write up" stories and "post it on the website". The television team thought to 'accept' was enough for online editors rather than to 'react'. Secondly, the television team ignored the online operations on breaking news.

The television editors might be clear about how breaking news was important to them but not for the online. They did not expect their online counterparts to require extra jobs from the correspondents. Mostly being unconscious, their ignorance placed the online editors at a lower status in the newsroom and this could also be revealed from the following words of online editors:

They [the websites] usually are an extension of the main thing. So in this case, the main business is the TV, and the extension is the web. It [the network] would always be supporting the cash cow and the TV is the cash cow. The website is basically a poor cousin and I think, essentially the web is there to support TV (interview with an online editor).

We don't have people on the ground. The web team doesn't have that resource. They all contribute to TV. So as to the ideal of convergence that the correspondent is to be both TV and web trained, it's not the reality in this newsroom (interview with an online editor).

I think the company gives the TV more priority. And the reason is that TV people are, at the end of the day, more visible. ... And the nature is: if you are not seen on TV, you're valued less. So, that's the nature of television. I think, the web probably is not seen as critical to people as those who are on TV (interview with an online editor).

From Case 2, we could see that AJE's newsroom had a 'stop-watch culture' driven by the 24-hour news cycle of the satellite news channel and the internet. In order to feed the insatiable appetite of news content, both television and online journalists chose news agencies as their main news source and published the news in a rolling format with high repetition of news content.

These findings echoed the results gained from the content analysis. Meanwhile, this section also examined the cultural conflicts between the two teams in AJE. It was learned that the tensions between the two outlets were not obvious, but this was not accounted for by the mutual understanding gained from crossmedia practices. Rather, ignorance of the other outlet's operation did cause a certain degree of tension to occur. The two teams did not get involved with each other too much and they worked separately. The television's ignorance of what its online counterpart operated caused some suspicions and complaints from the online.

Case 3: Some exceptional crossmedia practices

After examining the difference in news values and cultural issues between the two outlets at AJE, it was learned that: the development of crossmedia professional practices was influenced by some internal factors and was limited in the two cases discussed before. However, through the interviews with journalists at work, I also learned that there were some exceptional moments. This section will discuss some crossmedia practices in action in AJE, although they were exceptional, conditional, and based on personal expertise. As these practices were quite rare in the newsroom, in order to keep the integrity of this section, I shall discuss them together not just while focusing on Case 3 *Iran Election* alone.

Crossmedia Cooperation under Certain Conditions

The news aired on 5 August 2009 which covered the swearing in ceremony of Ahmadinejad as the President of Iran was sampled and analyzed in the content analysis discussed in Chapter 4. Coincidentally, during the ethnography, when I asked the journalists and editors how they worked across the two outlets, a number of them said that the news coverage of the *Iran Election* and its aftermath was a successful case of crossmedia journalism. So, in this section, I chose the news story again and will not repeat its background.

In the recent protest in Iran, after the election, websites, Twitter, YouTube, were very important for sources of information because it was very difficult for journalists on the ground to get true pictures of what was going on.

The problem with that is we can't often depend on them. We need verification. We need to treat them as another source and check the information as much as we possibly can (interview with a television editor).

We don't actually do a lot of news gathering just because we don't have people on the ground. ... If something is coming out of Iran, a protest, nobody is allowed to broadcast in Iran, then what the network's web team can do is to point TV in the right direction: there is something coming out, that kind of news gathering when nobody is on the ground (interview with an online editor).

It could be learned from the above words that the crossmedia cooperation happened conditionally in AJE. As the television team was very cautious about information from the Internet, the cooperation between the two outlets only

happened at some exceptional moments when “nobody is allowed to broadcast” and “nobody is on the ground”. Besides this exceptional case, crossmedia journalism was implemented with great difficulties in AJE’s newsroom although some journalists and editors had the expertise and were willing to embrace it.

I think some correspondents have embraced that. For example, one of our correspondents, Elen Fisher, he covers Europe, and he is very good. He gets the stories done quickly and then he is able to write his blogs on our site. He then can tweet. He is the person who embraces the new media. But the reality is: not all correspondents are happy with that.

Right now, it’s been most left to our correspondents and also personal relationships. So the correspondents out of KL office we may know them and sometimes we say, ‘hey, you go to such and such a place to see if you can find some time for us’. But that is a personal relationship thing (interview with an online editor).

The senior online editor noted that the scarce and personal crossmedia practices were accounted for by the journalists’ frustration at being ‘stretched too thin’ and the lack of money, time and training for crossmedia news production.

Often correspondents are stretched very thin when they go for a story [for TV], basically you may have no time to do the rest. ...The company has not yet made it mandatory for them. I don’t think they feel they can. Basically you need to put more money in it. So if you go for 4 days to do a story, you go for 5 days, find another day to spend on the web thing.

...The cross-training [between television and the web] is unfortunately hit by the economic slowdown. All trainings, not only that one, had been put on hold. It just started a few months before. Then [it] stopped, but it's supposed to start again.

Crossmedia Communication in A Casual Way

Communication has been regarded by many media convergence consultants as of “primary importance” in the implementation of crossmedia journalism (Gentry 2003; Singer 2008) and the “most effective way” to reduce uncertainty and resolve the journalists’ stereotyping and misunderstanding (Quinn 2005b). In AJE, crossmedia communication happened in two ways: formal and informal. With respect to formal communication across the two outlets, it seemed that the daily editorial meeting at around 00:20 GMT was the only communication channel. Despite this, during my two-week stay in AJE, I did not see any formal communication happening across the two outlets.

The editorial meeting was held on the television side and around twenty people from different desks took part in. Some sat in a circle around the News Desk, while others stood at the back with a cup of coffee in hand. The meeting was usually hosted by the Executive Producer or the operator on the News Desk. The senior online editor came to the television side, listened to the talk addressed by his television colleagues about news stories which were planned to be aired, but seldom joined in the discussions. After the meeting, he came

back to his desk quietly, dispatched the work to his subordinates, and then worked on his own tasks. The online editor did not contribute much to the meeting and when I asked him the reasons, he responded as follows:

In terms of contributing to that [editorial] meeting, it's essentially for TV. So the only time there is contribution from the web is, for example, when there is a special, we've done a special sub-site on it, a bunch of different things, like Galleries and Correspondent's Diaries and so on. So, TV is able to cross-promote that.

Other than that, the news interaction is usually one-to-one. Like the EP [the Executive Editor] today, I've been happy to talk with him throughout the day like: 'We've just found this, are you interested in it?' Something that is quite compelling and if it is missed, the EP will tell us: 'You are missing something, and you need to add that'.

As discussed before, the web team sat at the right side of the newsroom and was not 'very close' to the hub of television news production – the News Desk. This location still enabled informal communication between the two teams to easily happen. Although not 'very close' to the News Desk, if they were willing to, online editors could hear and watch the work practices of their television colleagues. When I asked an online editor how the two media outlets cooperated with each other in news production, he told me that:

Usually, there is no really formal way of doing that [crossmedia production]. If a story is breaking, we will basically shout it out. People just respond to the news, make some buzz on what's going on, so either the TV or web get it first, we will shout it out.

It would be interesting to analyze this casual talk and “shout-outs” of editors at work to examine whether they generated crossmedia practices or not. But as these practices happened in a casual, personal way, it should be very difficult for an ethnographer to notice the happening of these practices and study on them.

Through the three cases, we examined how convergent journalism was in action in AJE, and gained a richer understanding of what were the key factors to influence AJE’s implementation of convergent journalism. Some *internal* factors, including journalistic values, newsroom cultures and personal expertise were examined in the three cases. One focal point was revealed: journalists at work had not regarded crossmedia news production as a necessary way to develop “more complete journalism – telling stories in the most appropriate medium for a specific news event” (Quinn 2005b). They were busy working for their own outlets while often ignoring the other’s operation. The ignorance could be seen from the journalistic value on breaking news. The online team had not recognized the importance of breaking news to their work. Neither did television. Although there were some exceptional moments of developing convergent journalism, the level of convergence in AJE’s newsroom was not high.

Summary

In brief, this ethnographic research examined crossmedia journalism in a large context and attempted to find the relationship between journalists' professional practices with technology and news organization. Interesting findings were gained through the observations in the newsroom and interviews with journalists at work. It is learned that the development of convergent journalism in the newsroom is flexible – both journalists and news organizations are struggling between their ideals and reality. The weak development of convergence might be accounted for by external inaccessibility, such as lack of money and technology, but the willingness for better journalism and the multi-media mindset are vital for the development of convergence in the newsroom.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Internet technologies have brought the concept of convergence to the news industry and have caused tremendous transformation in both news production and news products. With respect to the 24-hour satellite news channel, its strength in providing live coverage of breaking news events has been challenged by the internet. The internet has also offered opportunities to the 24-hour satellite news channel as its news professionals have more platforms to collect, produce and publish breaking news, and thus to do better journalism. The transition from mono-media to multi-media has been in action in the news production process, especially in that of breaking news.

The purpose of this study was to extend the research on crossmedia journalism through focusing on understanding breaking news. Previous research focusing on crossmedia news production provides more insights into the *print* context rather than *broadcasting* newsrooms; therefore, the intent of this study was to fill a gap and offer further research in this area. Through examining how news professionals produce breaking news across broadcasting and the internet outlets, this study sought to look for whether journalism's core values are

being changed as journalism adapts to the different technological possibilities and pressures.

AJE was chosen as a case to study crossmedia news production at the moment of going live. The study was designed in two parts: content analysis on *news products* and ethnographic research on *news production*. A total of 265 pieces of television and online news were sampled and analyzed, approximately 120 hours of observations and 10 in-depth interviews were conducted in the newsroom.

It was revealed from the findings that there was not a high level of convergence in AJE's newsroom. The television and online coverage of breaking news events sampled in the content analysis did not show much cooperation or interactivity between the two outlets. Through examining crossmedia practices in large contexts at the levels of newsroom and organization, it was learned from the ethnography that crossmedia professional practices happened exceptionally and personally and the reasons were connected with a mixture of external inaccessibility and internal differentiatedness, including: unclear corporate commitment to convergence in production, a lack of convergence 'symbols' in the newsroom, different journalistic values for news, ignorance and suspicion in newsroom culture, insufficient training and investment, as well as varied individual expertise in

multi-skilled storytelling. There were not many crossmedia professional practices in AJE's newsroom and most of the exceptions happened in a casual and informal way.

A negative assessment of the weak development of crossmedia journalism at AJE is only part of the story, however. In the case of AJE, on the one hand there is some evidence of working together which is grounded in ideas of good journalism, while on the other hand I see many impediments to that. It is a big challenge to evaluate the level of adoption of convergent journalism at AJE as there are no clear patterns of 'successful convergent journalism' at other news organizations for AJE people to model their practice on, or a baseline for researchers like me as to evaluate. Without a top-down commitment to convergence, without a convergence 'symbol' (such as a multi-desk), crossmedia professional practices *did* still happen in AJE's newsroom and this leads me to reflect on two big theoretical issues concerned with convergence: What are the key factors that make convergent journalism succeed or fail and what are the relationships among these factors? To find the answers, I look back to the literature discussed earlier and re-examine it with the findings I gained from AJE.

It can be shown that the future of convergence is unclear and most media companies are practising it without a pattern (Gordon 2003; Storsul &

Stuedahl 2007). The reasons for convergence vary: including for better journalism and for good business (Quinn 2005a). News technology has offered multiple platforms for journalists to carry out more complete and better journalism, but news practices are “far from *technologically determined*” (Cottle & Ashton 1999). Differences in “the daily work of journalists, their work routines and their values” are still the missing part which lies at the centre of studies of the internet’s impact on journalism. “Cultural-based challenges” (Silcock & Keith 2006) are the common hurdles in the adoption of newsroom convergence. The literature help draw out the implications of this study’s findings: the differences of crossmedia practices were influenced by a set of *external* and *internal* factors, including organizational commitment to convergence, spatial layout of the newsroom, technological accessibility, journalistic values of news production, newsroom cultural issues, training and investment, as well as individual expertise. These factors are not mutually exclusive, that is their interplay makes newsroom convergence “not fixed; but back and forth depending on the nature of the news and the commitment to convergence by workers and managers” (Dailey et al. 2003:4). As McNair (1998) stated, journalism is always a matter of working through the impediments of news practice’s various contexts to try to meet the practice’s goals. News professionals are subject to pressures from technological,

economical, political, organizational, cultural and societal contexts, and often the pressure from one direction may contradict that from another.

Limitations

Although this research adopted a multiple method to provide a ‘thick description’ of crossmedia news practices at the moment of going live, there were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was related to the sample size with respect to content analysis on news products. The sample size was very small – only three news stories with a banner of “Breaking News” were selected from *News Hour* programmes aired in the sampled calendar week. During the analysis, it was difficult to look for a ‘pattern’ or a ‘characteristic’ of breaking news content. A second limitation was related to the ethnography – I did not adapt well to the fast-speed, internet-connected, and pressurized work of news professionals in a 24/7 news channel. I had to spend most of the time attempting to *learn* rather than *think* how news professionals worked on breaking news. Therefore, both of these limitations had an impact on the amount of data related to breaking news and made the results difficult to be generalized.

The third limitation was related to the interviews with news professionals at work. During the interviews, I asked more questions about *how* news professionals worked across the two outlets when making breaking news,

rather than *why* they worked in that way. More importantly, I did not much explore the internal factors involved with adopting convergent journalism, such as journalistic values, attitudes and cultures. This limitation affected the results reflecting more ‘physical’, ‘external’ reasons rather than ‘unseen’, ‘internal’ factors that influenced the implementation of crossmedia journalism. If more time were allowed to discuss the latter, the results may have more accurately reflected the key factors for implementing convergent journalism and more useful suggestions may have been proposed for AJE people.

Recommendations for the Future Exploration in Convergence

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations for future research. Firstly, some of the limitations outlined in this study may be minimized by a bigger sample of news content and a longer stay in the newsroom, in order to collect more data for this topic. Secondly, in order to provide accurate answers to the ways journalists worked across news outlets at the moment of going live, conceptual and cultural issues of news production should be taken into consideration. Finally this study only examined convergent journalism in AJE’s newsroom. Further studies could be conducted in other media groups, in order to draw a complete picture of convergence.

Convergence is an evolving concept and process. Convergence is happening in almost every media organization around the world, but there is no standardized

pattern to develop it. Media organizations and news professionals are struggling in this uncertain field with the twin aims of making money and providing better journalism. Their future is unclear and thus they are calling for more empirical studies to show them guidelines and directions.

At the end of this thesis, based on my own observations and findings in AJE's newsroom, I would like to provide some of the following suggestions to AJE people with an expectation that these suggestions would offer some help in the implementation of convergent journalism in AJE's newsroom.

- * A top-down organizational strategy that focuses on convergence for better journalism rather than convergence for multi-media publishing.

- * A convergence symbol such as a multi-media desk that gathers news information together and distributes it to the most appropriate medium for a specific news event.

- * Communication in news values that allows news professionals to understand the other's operational processes and to resolve stereotyping and misunderstanding.

* Investment and training in multi-media technologies that give news professionals a multi-media mindset and make them familiar with the new style of newsgathering and publishing.

It bears repeating that these suggestions did not mean convergence for better journalism was contradictory to convergence for multi-media publishing. Rather, it is hoped that these suggestions for undertaking external and internal transformation will better AJE's implementation of convergence thus satisfying the twin aims of good journalism and good business practices.

Appendix I: Coding Schedule for TV News

Title	Date	Breaking News	News Item
	1= 03/08/2009 2= 04/08/2009 3= 05/08/2009 4= 06/08/2009 5= 07/08/2009 6= 08/08/2009 7= 09/08/2009	1= yes 2= no	1= presented live 2= pre-recorded video package

Length of News Item	Presentation Style of Live News Item	Source
	1 = originated in the field 2 = originated in the newsroom 3= originated on the set	1= AJE 2= not AJE

Appendix II: Coding Schedule for Online News

Title	Date	Form of News	Source
	1= 03/08/2009 2= 04/08/2009 3= 05/08/2009 4= 06/08/2009 5= 07/08/2009 6= 08/08/2009 7= 09/08/2009	1= text only 2= text and photo but no video 3= text and/or photo and video	1= AJE 2= Agencies 3=AJE + agencies 4= Others

Form of Updatedness	Online Video Content
0= no update 1= update on text 2= update on photo 3= update on text and photo 4= update on video 5= update on text and video 6= update on text and photo and video 7= change in position 8= erase then add a new piece of news	1= reproduced from TV 2= not reproduced from TV

Appendix III: A List of Interview Questions

Q1: Does the network have some future plan for the website construction and some plan to push forward convergence?

Q2: Why is Malaysia chosen as AJE's headquarters' for Asia Pacific?

Q3: What is the most impressive live report you have made? What was your main work during the live coverage time? Why you think that is impressive?

Q4: What do you think of the work of making live reports? Do you think that it is challenging or uncontrollable, or have live reports become your routine work, and sometimes it is a case of going live for the sake of live?

Q5: What is the relationship between television and online staff in the newsroom and who has the priority to scoop breaking news?

Q6: In what news situation, will you deploy correspondents at the scene to make a live coverage? Are there any standards of making live reports?

Q7: What are the important skills a news journalist should obtain when making live coverage of breaking news stories?

Q8: What are the editorial standards of making breaking news online?

Q9: What is the process of making live news on television/online?

Q10: What are the important skills you think an online editor should obtain? Which are more important, journalist skills, multi-skills or internet skills?

Q11: Has the establishment of AJE's website brought real and great changes to the traditional TV work, or it is just supplementary?

Q12: Will the two outlets cooperate to make breaking news and why?

Appendix IV: Photos in AJE's Newsroom



Photo 1: AJE's Newsroom (Left)



Photo 2: AJE's Newsroom (Right)



Photo 3: News Anchors at Work



Photo 4: Gallery



Photo 5: SHAO in AJE's Newsroom

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